

MOSKOWITZ

Great Railroad Stories of the World

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Edited by

SAMUEL MOSKOWITZ

Lucius Beebe
Charles Dickens
Gerhart Hauptmann
W. E. Hayes

Marquis James
T. E. Lawrence
Jack McLarn
Frank L. Packard
Octavus Roy Cohen

William Saroyan
A. W. Somerville
Douglas Welch
Thomas Wolfe

McBRIDE

Great Railroad Stories
of the World

GREAT RAILROAD STORIES OF THE WORLD

Edited With Notes

by

Samuel Moskowitz

Introduction by

Freeman H. Hubbarb



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T O R O N T O

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Introduction

The Golden Age of railroading in the United States, and perhaps throughout the world, began in 1869 with the driving of the golden spike at Promontory Summit, Utah, and may be said to have ended half a century later, around the time that America's rail carriers were temporarily nationalized as a wartime measure. During most of this period the railroads were bursting with expansive energy and had no competitor more serious than the stagecoach. The depot, like the steamboat landing, was then an important social center. Families and friends would gather there to see their loved ones off and to welcome them back from trips. Young and old would hang around the station just to watch No. 97, or No. 5, or the Essex local pull in.

At night, the headlight of a wood-burning locomotive, steaming like a star of hope across the gopher-pitted prairie or around the bend on a mountain grade, reassured the isolated early settlers that they were not alone. A train ride in those days was a thrill. In fact, the railroad symbolized adventure and the lure of far-away places. Farmers' sons were leaving the soil in droves to go firin', brakin', and telegraphin'.

Nearly all of the railroad novels and the bulk of the railroad short stories were written during, and about, this era; and every one of the nostalgic fact-pieces, such as Lucius Beebe's account of the Virginia & Truckee, hark back to it. Railroad plays such as Lincoln J. Carter's *The Fast Mail*, in 1899, and Ramsay Morris's *The Ninety and Nine*, in 1902, were Broadway stage

hits. The very first story-telling motion picture, *The Great Train Robbery*, which former news butcher Thomas A. Edison put out in 1903, reflected the widespread interest in the steam cars of that time. Then telegrapher Frank A. Munsey, who was also a wealthy publisher, founded the *Railroad Man's Magazine*. Friends urged him to make it wholly factual, but Munsey replied editorially in the first issue (October, 1906): "My experience with the publishing business justifies me in saying that if all fiction were to be eliminated from the magazines of America, their combined circulation would speedily dwindle to not over 20 per cent of their present total." And so this periodical, now called *Railroad Magazine*, is today, as it was in 1906, the only magazine sold on the newsstands regularly to carry both railroad fiction and factual articles.

In Munsey's day there flourished a host of popular writers who specialized in railroad fiction, the leaders being Frank L. Packard, Cy Warman, Frank H. Spearman, and Francis Lynde. The period 1890-1910 is referred to as "the Golden Age of railroad literature" in Frank P. Donovan's book, *The Railroad in Literature*. Says Donovan, "More railroad stories were written in this era than in any other period before or since." Or, as Beebe puts it in *Railroad Magazine*, "the heroic episodes and daring adventures of the high iron may fairly be said to have dominated the general consciousness more than any other single phase or aspect of American life . . . For the student of the folklore of railroading in the Golden Age, the back files of illustrated magazines of the period, now gathering dust in the libraries and athenaeums of the land, are as yet unexplored bonanzas of potential riches."

The present book is based upon a serious effort to explore those riches, besides delving into modern

magazines and countless shelves of books of today and yesterday. The need for such a volume is accentuated by recent trends in transportation. The railroads which opened up the West are still vital to the democratic way of life; without them, today our economic system would totter. But the famous railroad stories, the ones chosen for this book, deal almost exclusively with the Golden Age, the Age of Steam, when a beautiful, white squirrel-plume of smoke curled above and behind every speeding locomotive, when the thunder of locomotive exhausts reverberated through the big woods of Oregon and across Florida's sandy beaches, and when the haunting lonesome wail of the steam-engine whistle evoked a kind of ecstasy, especially at night, telling the world that "the man at the throttle was Casey Jones," or Charlie Hogan, who made history by stepping through the dew with the 999, or John Draney, who set a new Lackawanna speed record by racing to the bedside of the dying President McKinley at Buffalo.

A few present-day writers, a very few, including Jack McLarn and Harry Bedwell, both currently employed in railroad jobs, have turned out some creditable fiction that deals to some extent with diesel-powered streamliners and push-button dispatching. It is likely that more of them will eventually appear as the hand-thrown switch and the cinder-pelted observation platform fade still further into the background; but right now, and possibly for years to come, the best railroad adventure stories, both true and fictional, center largely around the steam locomotive.

A prevalent quality of railroad narratives, whether true or fictional, is their down-to-earth realism. Even the Casey Jones folksong, despite its fantastic geography, tells about a flesh-and-blood hogger whose

widow and children are actually living today in Tennessee and Alabama. It is only natural, then, that realists like Dickens and Wolfe, to mention only two, rather than the masters of science-fiction, should write about the ribbons of steel.

And yet, with all their realism, the great railroad stories have a romantic flavor of their own. They conjure up sights, sounds, smells, and, to many of us, memories of long ago. You see again the glint of hard steel rails in the hot afternoon sun; you go back to the wild days when a career on the roaring road was the pathway to adventure and independence, when young fellows hired out to the trainmaster to discover what lay beyond the distant hills. You stand by the bridge and hear No. 6 whistle for the crossing, and almost instantly you see and hear her roar away into the darkness, exhaust blaring, lights gleaming in the coaches and Pullmans, and you smell the heady pungent smoke that climbs skyward. The cacophony of the railyard is music to your ears: the engine bells and whistles, the clanking and bumping of couplers, and the flanged wheels rolling endlessly over rail joints.

The aim of this book is to show you the long freight trains that lumber past, caravans loaded with dreams from far-off places that never appear on a waybill, and the men who run the railroads and the kind of lives they lead. Romance? Ah, yes. All over the world are thousands of trackside graves, most of them unmarked, where tracklayers, brakemen, and hobos are sleeping out eternity. An unidentified "Girl in Blue," killed by a train on Christmas Eve of 1933, is buried at Willoughby, Ohio. The wife of a Mormon pioneer who wasted away while crossing the Great Plains in 1852 lies on the Burlington right-of-way in southwestern Nebraska. Her tumulus, marked by an old wagon hoop and a modern granite slab, is a priceless heritage of

Western lore. And down at Gayle, Mississippi, in a sepulcher shaken by passing trains, are the remains of a convict tracklayer who was shot dead by a guard. Thus it goes; behind each railside tomb is a tragic story tinged with mystery. Jack McLarn's yarn, "Trackside Grave," is fiction but it might easily have been true.

Every important industry whose roots go down for a century and more, as with American railroading, has accumulated a lingo of its own—colorful words and phrases, many of which are no longer commonly used but which have enriched the nation's culture. You find them when you read about the oldtime cowboys, circus troupers, printers, and railroaders. Several of the stories in this book include bits of railroad slang; but these bits, if read with the context, should be readily understood, even by non-railfarers.

It is our belief that *Great Railroad Stories of the World* will prove both entertaining and informative to all readers who enjoy well-written narratives of the steel trail and cannot find enough of them in the libraries or on the newsstands. Thanks to the magic of print, the Golden Age of railroading will never die but will live on until the last flag is whistled in.

October 15, 1954

FREEMAN H. HUBBARD

Great Railroad Stories
of the World

A Tale of
The Old Main Line

By A. W. SOMERVILLE

A TALE OF THE OLD MAIN LINE

During the quest for outstanding railroad stories to fill this volume, the editor was reminded by any number of old-timers that during the 'twenties The Saturday Evening Post was the repository of any number of outstanding railroad stories. Research uncovered the fact that the Post was, indeed, distinguished by publishing many fine railroad stories during this period, but that, with the exception of one or two, they had all been written by one man—A. W. Somerville! The romance of the railroad is present in every line of Somerville's writing. It is the subject he has lived and worked with and therefore the subject he loves to write about. Somerville was born in Ferguson, Missouri in 1900, the son of a railroad man. His first railroad job was on the Texas and Pacific at Marshall, Texas in 1919. Since that time he has worked for many roads in every phase of the industry, but primarily he considers himself a machinist. While many railroad men have written stories with the flavor of authentic railroading, few have possessed a literary style as accomplished as that of Somerville. The combination of real railroading and craftsmanship won for Somerville inclusion of his "High Water" in The College Reader, edited by R. M. Lovett and H. H. Jones, as an outstanding American short story for college study.

WE WERE rolling through the new cut-off—sixty cars of meat and other perishables. Far, far ahead the scream of the engine whistle sifted back over the rumbling loads, drifted through the open windows and doors of the caboose. We were calling for the board, demanding the right to enter the terminal over the leased trackage known as the Belt.

"There's a story about the old main line, kid," said Johnny Griswold, the skipper. He puffed at his pipe.

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"Or maybe it ain't a story. I dunno." Puff, puff. "I use more matches than I do tobacco, kid." Puff, puff. "I've waded through a couple of million magazines, I bet, an' I ain't never seen a yarn like it. Funny kind of story."

"Yeah," I contributed.

"It's about Bob Maddox," said Johnny seriously—"Whistlin' Bob Maddox."

"Shucks!" quoth the lad. "Everybody on the system knows that yarn."

"Do they, now?" said the conductor, looking wise.

"Bob Maddox," I said. "Why, skipper, I've worked up on the old main line."

"I was at Townley when he left," said Johnny. "Kid, you never seen such a storm. March 3, 1903—that's the date. She derailed at Long Street crossing; they never raised the engine." He talked and talked and talked. "She's at the bottom of the Smoky"—puff, puff—"she's covered over with silt, but there never was such an engine. The Luella Maddox."

"Listen, skipper," I interrupted: "the whole business was just tragedy. Maddox's wife was trifling. I've heard it said that Maddox's own fireman, named Polk, was the guilty one."

"Maybe so, kid," said Johnny, puffing on his pipe. "Her name was Luella Maddox."

I nodded. We sat a while in silence.

"I tell you there's a real story behind all this." Johnny astonished me with his vehemence. "Get your mind out of the gutter an' forget some of your big words, an' you might see it!"

II

I was pretty familiar with the story of Maddox, and

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Johnny told me many things that heretofore I'd guessed at or vaguely wondered about. I knew why Maddox always whistled at Long Street; knew, as did everyone, that he was reputed to have done so for twenty-six years. But Johnny hinted at other things.

After I left the skipper I did my best to dig out all the facts of the yarn. Newspaper files, railroad records; I burrowed and delved into reams of musty papers. I hunted up several old-timers, talked with them.

No. 5, the Cannonball, was derailed at Long Street crossing just outside Carlysle, on March 3, 1903. Robert Maddox was the engineer, Antonio Polk was the fireman, the engine was the Luella Maddox. Records, records, records: Mrs. Maddox, killed with a companion at Long Street crossing, March 3, 1903. An account of the derailment, explanations of the causes. An account of the storm at March 3, 1903; of the run the Luella Maddox made that night. One hundred and ninety-six miles from Townley by the old main line, yet in three hours and twenty minutes she was coming into Carlysle!

An estimate of the cost of raising the Luella Maddox from the Smoky, and the abandonment of the project because of prohibitive costs. And one faded sheet, which afterward I was to remember well—a record of the failure of the Luella Maddox on March 1, 1903—two days before the wreck. She had broken a guide yoke and another engine had to tow her train home. Gossip, gossip, gossip. Mrs. Maddox had been unfaithful. Maddox thought Tony Polk was the guilty one—Tony Polk, his own fireman. Knew this to be true, in fact, on the afternoon of March third of that long-ago year.

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A picture of the Luella Maddox, old and faded. On the side of the headlight the full face of her for whom the engine was named.

One day I drove out the river road from Carlysle until I came to Long Street. I parked the car near the underpass and waited for the River Branch local. Once this had been the route of the main line.

I knew the formula when Maddox passed Long Street. I heard the plug coming, heard the whistle wail mournfully, heard the bell ding-donging. The whistle wailed and the bell clamored as the engine rumbled past overhead. I looked up and saw Maddox, thin lips, hard eyes, leather face. The same old grouch I'd known, big as a mountain, hard as a grate bar. I waved at him, but he never so much as glanced down.

After the local had passed. I climbed the fence and entered the vacant lot reputed to be owned by Maddox. In a corner of this lot was a small, grassy square within which was a marble headstone. Though badly worn by the changing climate and the storms of more than a quarter of a century, the lettering could still be read:

LUELLA MADDUX

MARCH 3, 1903

III

"He's back again," boomed Johnny Griswold. "Take the weight off your feet, kid. Be with you in a minute."

Soon he was free of his caboose desk, came and squatted.

"Write that story, kid?"

I told him of my researches, of my talk with old-timers. We jabbered at each other. I showed him the brown, faded picture of the Luella Maddox.

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"There never was such a engine," from Johnny, waving the photograph wildly. "I tell you she could outrun anything on wheels! And never a black mark against her."

I denied this, saying I had seen the bulletin of her failure two days before the wreck.

"You would find that," said the skipper coldly. He lit his pipe, puffed spasmodically. "Well, did you write the story?" he growled.

I produced the short manuscript.

"This is just the body of the yarn," I explained. "How a person is supposed to do a job when he doesn't understand what he's trying to do has got me licked. You tell me the secret of this mystery and I might do better."

Johnny reached for the typed pages.

"Most of it's just outline," I said, "you understand."

"Lemme alone, you mutton-head," said the skipper impatiently, beginning to read.

THE MANUSCRIPT

Robert Maddox, railroad engineer, married a finely built young woman with the face of an angel and practically no morals. She fooled him for years, for Maddox had a single-track mind and it never occurred to him to suspect her.

The time of this yarn is the beginning of the twentieth century—back in the days when railroad engines were named rather than numbered, back in the days when each engineer had an engine of his own. Maddox was married on the day he took charge of his first assigned engine, and this locomotive, so old railroad records show, was named the Jenny Lind.

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Several days after his marriage, to the utter consternation of various officials, Maddox rechristened his mill—renamed her the Luella Maddox. He'd had a painter blot out Jenny Lind on the cab and reletter it with the name of his wife. He bolted a heavy brass casting on the front end with L. M. in bright, raised figures shown thereon. And, splendor of splendors, on each side of the headlight was a full-face picture of the young woman, and at night, with the wick lit, you could make out her features from a distance of three hundred yards.

How Bob Maddox got away with this is difficult to explain. The brass hats may have charged it up to the natural aberrations of a young married man and let the matter ride. Then, too, it must be admitted that Luella was not unknown in railroad circles, and probably popular. The point of the matter is that Maddox was ready to risk nearly anything to please his wife, that the engine was named Luella Maddox, and that the name stuck.

The Luella Maddox was an American type locomotive—one of the breed that has established speed records up to one hundred and twenty miles an hour. Built like a greyhound, slender barrel and four slim-spoked drive wheels—built for speed. She carried a water pump on her right crosshead that always worked, and an inspirator in the cab that had never been known to do business. Her graceful rods, as well as all motion work, carried the sheen of polish; she was smothered with brass and nickel and copper, not to mention gold leaf for lettering and a silver whistle for dress occasions.

She gleamed like fabled treasure and she could out-run a tornado. She was called the pride of the system, and no less than nine women wrote poems and dedi-

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cated same to her. As for Bob Maddox, if he found so much as a speck of rust on his second love, he wasn't fit for human companionship for two weeks.

It was a standing joke on the railroad as to whether Maddox was married to his wife or to his engine. A fine runner, a high-class mechanic, this Maddox. He and the Luella set the division record for fast running, towing the Cannonball, and to this day the record stands, like this:

June 16, 1900.

Train No. 5, Townley to Carlsyle, 196 miles.

Lapsed time, 3 hrs., 42 min.

Between Oden and Hypo attained speed of 106.3 m. p. h.

Engine: Luella Maddox.

Engineer: Robt. Maddox.

Fireman: Antonio Polk.

Around 1900 the engineer was also the mechanic, and was held responsible for all necessary light repairs. Maddox sweated Tony Polk until the fireman was sick of the engine. It wasn't enough to cram her with coal all day or all night; when they'd made the terminal Tony had just begun to work. Maddox loved doing it; Tony got fed up on the everlasting program of work, work, work. Probably Maddox was a hard master, but he had a reputation to sustain, and, regardless of the feelings of the fireman, he proceeded to sustain it.

The Luella Maddox entered service in 1899; in four years she traveled better than 380,000 miles, and the only time she was out of line was when she broke a guide yoke on March first of 1903. And that failure—the one and only—was caused by a faulty casting and not by shoddy workmanship. These facts are high praise to Engineer Maddox.

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It was in the winter of 1903 that it was rumored up and down the railroad that the brass hats were considering pooling all locomotives. All engines on present-day railroads are pooled—that is, the roundhouse maintains all engines in good running repair and the first engineer out gets the first locomotive ready for service. No engineer, thus, has any regularly assigned engine. If the rumor that fled up and down the rails in the spring of 1903 was true, Maddox realized he would lose the Luella, and he would as soon have parted with his right arm. It was in the spring of 1903, also, that Maddox began to have definite suspicions of his wife. That he suspected Tony Polk is not to be doubted.

These two things must have worried Bob Maddox a great deal; his little world seemed about to crumble around his ears. Certain it is that he began to spend every spare minute working his engine, taking up brasses, reducing lateral, making her as near perfect mechanically as a locomotive can be made. Rumor said that the engines were to be pooled because the engine crews were not maintaining them. This was a reaction, you might say—his trying to make his engine perfect. His trouble at home was the basis for it. His engine was all he had left, and he wanted to keep her.

Those who knew him used to wonder when he slept. When he wasn't out on the road he was working. Tony Polk dodged him whenever possible; everyone thought the fireman did this because Maddox was so unreasonable. Tony kept away from Maddox as much as he could, but the reason for this wasn't altogether a distaste for work.

On March first the Luella failed. Maddox rawhided his fireman, blamed everybody for the rotten casting. Not a pleasant man to be around when soreheaded—this broad-shouldered, big-fisted Maddox. On March

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second they got a new guide yoke and installed it, but for some reason they weren't called that night. Perhaps Maddox found some other work he wanted to do.

All this at Townley. And it was at Townley, on the afternoon of March third, that curly-haired Tony Polk spilled every bean in the bag. Tony was at a table in the railroad restaurant, bragging with a couple of switchmen—bragging in a loud voice. He didn't see Maddox enter; Tony said some terribly vulgar things in regard to Luella Maddox. Bob Maddox couldn't help but hear. Between the two switchmen trying to get out the door and Maddox trying to murder his fireman, business was brisk in that restaurant for several moments. A mob of good Samaritans pulled Maddox off of Tony. The engineer calmed down, the fireman took on the semblance of life, and the whole affair seemed to blow over.

"Maybe that'll teach you how to speak of your betters," said Maddox coldly.

Tony mumbled and hung his head.

As has been said, this happened the afternoon of March third. The storm had just started. Yet, after Maddox left the restaurant, he worked on his engine until train time—worked out in the open in the driving rain.

Tony didn't show up, and wouldn't go out on his run until he was threatened with dismissal. He didn't want to go to Carlyle and have Maddox face him with Luella.

No. 5—the Cannonball—was due at Townley at 6:58 P. M. She was late that night—better than two hours late. It was after nine when her whistle screamed through the brawling storm and the gleam of her headlight played dimly on the timbers of the viaduct.

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She ground to a stop. Oily flares flickered, leaped high to smatter the drab coaches a bloody hue. Voices called to other voices through the rain, a lantern bobbed, the engine chuffed away. The Luella Maddox, gleaming under the soggy, driving blanket of rain, coupled in under the steady hand of Maddox.

"I don't want to go," said Tony Polk to the call boy. "There's no tellin' what Maddox might do."

"He's not crazy enough to hurt that engine," answered young John Griswold, the call boy.

"What a night!" mumbled Tony, shivering.

From the cab, Maddox shouted at the fireman, cursed him.

"See?" said Tony miserably to the call boy. "What-cha want?" he demanded, climbing bravely up the gangway.

"A fire, you loafer," said Maddox.

"I'll give you a fire," retorted Tony, "but you'd better save your compliments."

"You'd better save your breath for work," said Maddox, cursing.

Tony was not without a certain amount of courage, but though he mumbled under his breath, he built up his fire and kept the back talk in his throat.

"We're goin' in on time," said Maddox grimly, "and if you don't give me the steam to do it with, you'll wish you'd never been born."

Tony should have jumped—dropped his scoop and jumped. He missed his chance, and he never got another. A lantern bobbed, Maddox widened out, and they slammed westward.

The devil marched his cohorts out of hell that night, and their playground was the stretch between Townley and Carlysle. The wind was an avalanche, the rain a second flood. There was a tugging, soggy suction

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through the cab, and the glare from the fire door clotted deck and gangway and bunker with bloody stretches. Tony had ten pounds of lead in his belly. Maddox had said he was going through on time!

The fireman glanced at his watch, reading it in the red maw of the fire box. Five hours and thirty minutes was the schedule; to come in on the money better than two hours must be sliced from the running time! One hundred and ninety-six miles to Carlysle, with roller-coaster sags and curves where even heart oak couldn't hold the rails in line. With washouts as common as fleas on a gutter mutt. It was madness! Suicide!

"Suicide!" thought Tony. Ghastly thought.

He pitched his scoop in the bunker, slid across the buckling deck of the Luella to plaster his face against the narrow front window. The rain was a writhing curtain flung in long streamers from stack and dome and sand box; the sound of the flailing waters half drowned the rhythm of exhaust. They were rocketing through an interminable cascade, packed in inky blackness above and from the sides. Fifty feet in advance of the long-nosed pilot the beams of the headlight were gulped from sight; only when the crackle of lightning split the universe could Tony pick out landmarks and trace the shimmering, beckoning rails. Dimly through the murk Tony could make out the side of the headlight, could glimpse the lighted face of the unfaithful wife of the engineer. Lightning short-circuited the heavens; he saw her plainly, clearly in the goblin flare. His guilt was the rack of a torture chamber, the sweat oozed from his pores.

He felt a heavy hand on his shoulder, whirled to face Maddox.

"Get back to work!" snarled the engineer.

Careening, pitching, bucking through the black

night went the Luella Maddox, hanging to the slippery rail somehow, wrenching around the bends, smashing through the sags. Eighty, ninety, one hundred miles an hour on the down grades; the cab floor a jackstraw in a typhoon, the fireman whitefaced, Maddox sneering, jeering down from his seat on the right-hand side. Tony looked ahead again, saw the bright face of the woman leading them on that wild, insane ride, and he looked no more until the end.

Over the hills to the river, westbound for the river—the meanest stretch of rail ever spiked. Tony shoveled, clung to a grab iron, shoveled, clung like a leech again, prayed for the luck to hold. She flattened out the bumps, she straightened out the curves.

“I want steam!” Maddox standing over him on the pitching cab floor, snarling in his ear, the Luella blaring, bouncing, the storm screaming, brawling, as they cannonballed down the steel highway at eighty miles an hour.

Twice, climbing hills, Tony saw the water drop from sight in the gauge glass, knew that only a thin film lay between them and destruction. And twice he tried desperately to prime his inspirator, and twice Maddox sneered at him, cursed him: “Scared, you lousy scum? Keep her hot! D’ya hear me? Keep her hot!” And the engineer would wait until they’d climbed the grade, wait until Tony would know an explosion was only a matter of minutes, before he’d throw cold water into the boiler with his crosshead pump.

They came down on Mill Creek with the exhaust a blended ripple through the storm. Tony saw the lights flash by the gangway, knew the section men were out on emergency work. Washout! He waited numbly for the crash, clinging to his favorite grab iron. She flipped up drunkenly, dropped like an elevator, tore Tony

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loose from his hold and flung him against the back boiler head! They thundered across the bridge, trying to swap ends!

Maddox nearly went through his window, but he climbed down, wooden-faced, picked up Tony's scoop, handed it to him, and then deliberately kicked the fireman into the bunker.

"I want steam!" said Maddox.

Tony resumed his shoveling. They made the river, outrunning the storm. No rain now, but the mists from the Smoky wrapped about the woman on the headlight, embraced her, enveloped the cab, streamed behind like ribbons in the wind. Down the twin steel lanes, hugging the river bank, a comet through the night.

"She'll make it!" Maddox was jabbering. "She'll make it! We're coming in on time! I knew she'd do it!" He danced crazily, crowing, flapping his arms. Tony was paralyzed. Maddox glared at him insanely. "When we get in, you'll eat what you said at Townley!" he screamed.

Tony backed away, but Maddox cuffed him. The fireman fell near his seat box and Maddox shouted at him, cursing, and then went back to his side. Tony crawled toward the bunker.

From Long Street north up the Smoky the rising vapor hung like a bank of cumulus along the right of way. Level as the water in a tumbler ran the rails; the lady of the headlight split the fog as a flaming arrow rips through cheesecloth. Tony filled her up with coal, kicked the fire door shut, climbed wearily up on his seat and prayed for the luck to hold.

Ancient records, mellowed and yellowed by the years, established the fact that the Luella Maddox was doing close to ninety miles an hour as she came

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down on Long Street, with three coaches on her tail. Tony said ninety. Maddox said he didn't know and didn't care. The conductor, just before he joined the angels, said at least ninety.

The fog must have thinned about two hundred yards from the crossing, for Tony saw and screamed to the engineer. Maddox had time to blow the whistle of his engine for the last time.

They were on top the horse and buggy within one hazy second; two humans went to their Creator in the click of a rail joint. The horse, by some trick of fate, fell as the pilot struck—and was swept beneath the front end. Some twenty yards below the crossing was a switch, and the body of the horse and the wreckage of the pilot broke the bridle rod of this switch, and the Luella Maddox, whistle screaming, left the rail.

The banks are high along the Smoky near Long Street, and the water flows deep. Tony jumped and lost his legs, but Maddox stayed with his engine, hand on the throttle, gaze riveted on the picture on the side of the headlight.

She came over the bank in a long arch, struck an old stone pier with her left side and ruptured boiler and fire box. As the waters closed about her she exploded. To which fact Maddox owed his life, even though he cared nothing about living. The blast of steam blew the fire door off and shot the engineer to the surface with half a cab window around his neck, no shoes on his feet, no clothing on his body except his garters and his cap. A stupefied fisherman, nearly swamped by the geyser of water, picked Maddox up.

There was little left of the pair in the buggy, but the woman was easy to identify. She was Luella Maddox. The other was identified as a local man, none too sav-

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ory of reputation. There is little left of this story, too, beyond the following facts:

In April, 1903, Maddox returned to the cab. He had purchased the lot near Long Street and had erected the marble headstone. When passing it he always whistled, always made the fireman ring the bell. He whistles for Long Street to this day—not the standard crossing whistle, but a series of long blasts.

Perhaps Bob Maddox tells the woman he named his engine for, each time he whistles, that he doesn't believe she was untrue—or if she was, he doesn't care—that he suffers daily because of her death, and that he still loves her. Most of all, that he still loves her.

For that's the way he whistles.

IV

Johnny Griswold finished reading the above manuscript. He leaned back and closed his eyes for a moment. Finally he spoke.

"Kid," he said, "there was a part of this thing," he waved the manuscript, "that started to come close. You got warm, see, but you petered out. You missed it." He seemed to be trying to stare a hole through the roof of the caboose.

"I was a call boy at Townley then," he resumed. "I remember, plain as day, Maddox workin' round his engine, shinin' her up, makin' her the classiest mill that ever turned a wheel. Kid, he was so proud of that engine that there ain't no way to tell how he felt about it."

He paused again, staring at the creaking roof.

"That bulletin you found—about her failing out on the road. That like to broke his heart. I know you've been thinkin' all along about his wife. Why,

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kid, you could pretty near leave her out of this yarn and it wouldn't hurt it none. Maddox had known for about a year what she'd been up to, and he'd quit her. It wasn't common knowledge, but he wasn't even livin' with her at the time of the wreck."

"That doesn't make sense, skipper," I said. "He nearly murdered Tony in that restaurant for what he said about her."

"There's the catch," said Johnny, smiling grimly. "Tony was talkin' about Luella Maddox, all right. Tony said some lousy things too. I was standin' behind Maddox, I'd followed him in the door. Tony said something about puttin' her in pooled service. 'She's gettin' old,' said Tony, 'and she's not so spry. It's got so lately that anybody can run around her in a horse an' buggy.'"

The light began to dawn.

"Maddox thought he meant the engine," said Johnny. "She'd failed, they were talkin' about poolin' all the power. He was thinkin' about his engine all the time."

We were silent awhile. The shadows from the coal-oil lamp behind us bounced dizzily, there was the sleepy roar of the moving train.

"Hey, skipper!" bawled the rear brakeman from the cupola. "They've got a hand-up for you."

"I'll get it," I told Johnny, grabbing the chance to shake the cobwebs out of my mind.

I caught the order off the hoop, handed the green slip to Johnny. He read it, stepped over to the brakeman, shouted for a moment, handed him the order. He came back and sat down.

"What do you think Maddox has got under that tombstone?" he demanded suddenly.

"I don't know," I answered, startled.

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"He's got a locomotive bell and a whistle," answered Johnny grimly.

I nearly jumped out of my skin.

"How close did you look at that slab?" demanded the skipper.

"Pretty close."

"You didn't look close enough," was the cold answer, "or you'd have known all this before now. Lemme have your pencil a minute."

This is what Johnny lettered on the back of a time card:

THE
LUELLA MADDOX
MARCH 3, 1903

The Stolen Railroad Train

BY MARQUIS JAMES

THE STOLEN RAILROAD TRAIN

Few episodes in the history of American railroading are as colorful or exciting as the events chronicled in the tale which follows. A group of Union spies, penetrating deep into Southern territory during the Civil War, steal a Southern railroad train with the intention of destroying the South's most important rail link. When stalwarts of the Old South give chase in another locomotive, real drama ensues. In a museum in Atlanta, Georgia, proudly rests the engine which gave chase to the Northern spies. Ironically, it was built in Paterson, N. J.! Marquis James, who has written what is perhaps the best fictionized version of a railroading event which ranks with Jessie James and Casey Jones, was the son of a lawyer in the old West's Cherokee Strip. From his youngest days he worked as a newspaper reporter and writer, but attained his greatest success when he turned his attention to history and biography. His biography of Sam Houston sold a hundred thousand copies during the depression and won the Pulitzer Prize. His two-volume biography of Andrew Jackson sold a quarter of a million copies and again captured the Pulitzer prize. Since that time Marquis James' place as a historian and biographer has been secure. It is fortunate that a man with such a singularly appropriate literary background should try his hand at a great railroad historical event. The result is a real classic of railroad literature.

ON SUNDAY EVENING, the sixth of April, 1862, a tall, carefully dressed civilian with a heavy black beard and the inflection of the South in his speech, presented himself to the pickets of Mitchel's Division, encamped near Shelbyville, Tennessee. His papers were in order and he was admitted.

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Major General O. M. Mitchel and the spy sat down over a map and it was daylight before they reached an agreement. The scheme offered by the secret agent was such that even a soldier as bold as Mitchel drew back. But step by step the civilian justified the proposal. Audacity would promote its success, he said, and success would be worth any risk. General Mitchel's caller asked for thirty picked men from whom to make his personal selections, and at length Mitchel agreed he should have them.

That forenoon thirty volunteers were culled from the veteran Second, Twenty-first and Thirty-third Ohio Infantry Regiments, the colonels passing upon the qualifications of each man, who was told that a detail was being made up for duty involving great personal peril. Though occupied with plans for a military advance, General Mitchel himself took the time to look over a few of the applicants. In the afternoon the chosen thirty were sent to Shelbyville to purchase civilian clothing and to report to J. J. Andrews, a tall civilian with a heavy beard who would be found on the streets of the town.

Shelbyville was full of soldiers, and, as soldiers often laid off their uniforms when going home on furlough, the thirty made their purchases without exciting comment. J. J. Andrews was easily identified. He sauntered about the streets, frequently entering a store to take an apparently idle interest in a soldier who was buying clothing. In the course of the afternoon all thirty approached him, singly or in small groups, for they were generally unknown to one another. He would ask what they were to report to him for. The soldiers would say that they did not know, or something of the sort. Andrews would ask them a few questions. Then in a casual tone he would say, "You may

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meet me tonight shortly after dark on the Wartrace Road a mile or so from town." To five or six he said, "There must be some mistake. I am not the man you are looking for." Their demeanor had not satisfied the Union spy.

Nor was Sergeant Major Marion Ross altogether satisfied with his interview. "A mile or so from town." "Shortly after dark." The instructions were so vague that he asked his friend Corporal William Pittenger what he thought of this Andrews. "I answered with enthusiasm," the Corporal related in after years. "The strong influence this singular man never failed to exert over those who were brought in contact with him was already at work. His pensive manner, his soft voice, not louder than a woman's, his grace and dignity made me at once declare him above the ordinary type of manhood. He was more like a poet than an adventurer, but I would have trusted him to the end of the earth."

2

Such whole-hearted endorsement put Ross in entire agreement with his friend's estimate. In fact, his curiosity was now aroused and he wished that he knew more about their new leader. And General Mitchel himself would have liked to know more about James J. Andrews, but all he knew or ever learned was that he was a good spy and described himself as a resident of Flemingsburg, Kentucky.

This town was equally unsatisfied with the scope of its knowledge. Andrews had come there two years before the war—from Virginia, as he said, but he gave no particulars. Something about the man suggested an interesting past. Flemingsburg believed he "had a story."

Perhaps one person in Flemingsburg really knew.

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She was Elizabeth Layton, to whom Mr. Andrews, after a long courtship, had just become engaged. They were to be married in two months, and a part of the bargain was that Andrews should abandon his perilous profession as a Union secret agent. The service he had proposed to Mitchel was intended to be his last. It was calculated to reveal to the world where his true loyalties lay, for in the South Andrews was known as a confidential agent of the Confederate armies.

The night following the interviews at Shelbyville was pitch dark and the rain fell in sheets. Twenty-four men, singly or in small parties, trudged through the mud of the Wartrace Road. Several of them were hopeless of meeting Andrews or anyone on such a night. Yet twenty-three of the twenty-four found him as readily as if they had had daylight and explicit directions to guide them. Andrews led them into a patch of woods near the road and began to speak in a quiet voice, stopping when the thunder was too loud for him to be heard distinctly.

He said that the expedition for which they had volunteered would take them into the enemy's country in disguise, which meant that anyone captured and detected would probably be hanged as a spy. Therefore, anyone unwilling to take the risk might now withdraw. Mr. Andrews paused. No one stirred and in a few sentences the speaker outlined the undertaking. In bands of two to four, the party would proceed to Marietta, Georgia, in the heart of the Confederacy, arriving on Thursday, four days hence. The following morning they would capture the north-bound mail train from Atlanta to Chattanooga, and run it to Bridgeport, Alabama, burning bridges behind them and rendering useless a hundred and thirty miles of railroad and telegraph. At Bridgeport, the party

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would meet Mitchel in the course of his southward advance. The destruction of these communications would paralyze the movement of Southern armies in the Central West and embarrass Lee's operations in Virginia.

"I shall be in Marietta with you or before you," said Mr. Andrews, "and there will tell each man what to do."

The route from Shelbyville to Marietta was long and difficult, and Andrews gave his men a few pointers on travel. If questioned, the best thing to say was that they were Kentuckians on their way to join the southern armies. But the men were to use their heads. They had been selected because they were thought capable of independent action.

"But what if they take us at our word and insist that we enlist?" asked one.

"Oh, be looking for a special regiment that is some place else. But if diplomacy fails, enlist any place."

"What if they won't take us?"

"No danger about that," replied Andrews. "The difficulty is not to get in but to stay out of the rebel army."

Andrews distributed seven hundred dollars of Confederate money and shook hands with each man. "Good-by. Good-by, Sergeant. Marietta not later than five, Thursday afternoon. Now, move out, men. Not more than four together."

3

On the appointed Thursday—April 10, 1862—two of the twenty-three reached Marietta. They strolled about town until late and went to bed uneasy. All day Friday they waited without a sign of one of their comrades, so far as they were able to recognize, the party

having been together but once and then in the dark. The evening train from Chattanooga, however, brought Andrews and the remainder of his men, except two who were never heard from.

Incessant rain had made traveling difficult. When the party converged at Chattanooga to take the train for Marietta, Mr. Andrews had passed the word that the raid should be postponed one day. Thus all but the two men who had outstripped their schedule by a few hours had lain over at Chattanooga. Andrew's reason for the delay was that he felt it better to run the captured train into Bridgeport a day late than risk getting there ahead of Mitchel, whose advance, he figured, would be retarded by the weather.

At Marietta the men slept in different hotels and at dawn met Andrews in his room for final instructions. As usual the leader did not waste a word. "Buy tickets to different points up the line. Take seats in the same car. When the train stops at Big Shanty remain seated until I tell you to go. When the signal is given, if anybody interferes, shoot him."

The ranking soldier present was Sergeant Major Ross, whose courage was well known. Respectfully asking permission to speak, he suggested that the whole project be dropped or delayed for a reconsideration of all the factors involved. The delay of one day had altered everything, said Ross. Big Shanty was surrounded by troops; the line was congested by rolling stock being hurried out of Mitchel's reach; should Mitchel get to Bridgeport on time, the raiders, a day late, might miss him. Very courteously Mr. Andrews took up Ross's objections. He said the excitement and confusion caused by Mitchel's drive into Alabama would facilitate, not hinder, the flight of the fugitive train. "Boys," he concluded, after dismissing the last

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of the sergeant major's arguments, "I will succeed in this or leave my bones in Dixie."

That was the nearest to a heroic speech that J. J. Andrews ever made. He closed his watch and picked up his tall silk hat. The depot was just across the street and there was barely time before the train came in to buy tickets.

An hour later Conductor William A. Fuller walked through the coaches. Fuller was a wiry young fellow with a blond goatee and steady gray eyes.

"Big Shanty!" he called. "Twenty minutes for breakfast."

The sleepy passengers began to scramble toward the door. Andrews rose and beckoned to William Knight, who had been designated as engineer. The station was on the right side of the track. Four Georgia regiments were encamped on the left side and a bored sentry walked his post within a few feet of the cars. Andrews and Knight got off on the side next to the camp. They strolled forward and took a look at the engine. The cab was empty. Behind the tender were three empty freight cars. Andrews stopped beside the last one.

"Uncouple here," he told Knight.

He walked to the coach where the other men were waiting. Strolling part of the way down the aisle, Andrews paused and said in an ordinary tone, "Come on, boys, it's time to go."

4

Wilson W. Brown, the relief engineer, and George D. Wilson, the fireman, swung off and darted toward the locomotive. Knight was in the cab with his hand on the throttle. Andrews signaled the others to tumble into the box-cars—all the work of probably twelve sec-

ounds. Knight pulled the throttle half-way open. The wheels spun on the track but the train did not move. Then the wheels "bit" and the engine, the three box-cars attached, shot forward with a bound that piled the box-car passengers in a heap.

They scurried to their feet to look from the doors and cheer. The start had been propitious beyond expectation. The picket, near enough to have used his bayonet, was staring in open-mouthed amazement—which, after all, was a fortunate negligence on the part of this green recruit, as each of Andrews' men carried a cocked pistol in his coat.

The feeling of triumph was short-lived, however. Less than a mile from the Confederate camp the engine began to falter, which was strange, for this locomotive, the *General*, was rated one of the best on the Western and Atlantic road. Shortly this excellent engine stopped dead, and Andrews, who was in the cab, called to the men in the cars to cut the telegraph wires. While John Scott, the smallest man in the party, was shinning up the telegraph pole, the trouble with the engine was located. The draft was shut off and the fire nearly out. Wood doused with oil soon had the fire-box roaring and they were on their way again.

Nothing now, said Andrews, who was not given to strong statements, could defeat them. Cutting the wires at this point was an excess precaution. There was no need for it so soon as Big Shanty lacked a telegraph office. Pursuit would be a matter of hours, the nearest engines available for this purpose being at Atlanta on the south and Kingston on the north, each about thirty miles from Big Shanty. Three south-bound trains from Chattanooga must be dealt with, but Andrews had arranged for that. He would adhere to the regular time on the mail train until Kingston

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was reached, and pass there a local freight, the first of these trains. After burning some eleven bridges beyond Kingston and keeping the wires cut to prevent word from getting ahead of them, the raiders could skirt Chattanooga by means of the "Y" below the town, and dash westward into Alabama where Mitchel would be waiting.

The schedule of the fast mail from Atlanta was sixteen miles an hour, and Andrews had difficulty in holding his engineers down to that speed, even though the track was crooked and soft from the rains, and the rails light and worn by the constant travel of military trains. The local freight must be passed at Kingston and it would be better to take it easy en route than to get to Kingston early and have to wait. So they jogged along, stopping once to relieve a track repair gang of its tools, and again to cut wires and lift a rail. The rail-lifting was slow work, as the tools they had taken were not the proper ones.

Half-way to Kingston Andrews received a surprise. Slowing up for a private switch that led to the Etowah Iron Works, five miles off the main line, he saw a locomotive fired up not forty feet from the main track. It was the veteran *Yonah*, owned by the iron works, and, carefully as he had explored the road, Andrews had not learned of its existence until now. Knight put on the brakes.

"We had better get rid of them," he suggested.

Andrews hesitated. "No," he said, "go ahead. It won't make any difference."

Andrews did not wish to risk a delay in meeting the freight at Kingston. Beyond Kingston he could destroy track and thwart pursuit by the *Yonah* as effectively as by attacking its crew and the iron works gang at the switch. The decision reveals an important

difference in temperament between Andrews and his men. The men would have preferred to disable the *Yonah* on the spot. They were soldiers, the pick of a first-class division, and accustomed to direct methods. Andrews' way was otherwise—to avoid clashes and to finesse his way through tight places where the flick of an eyelash might mean death.

5

Seven miles from Kingston was Cassville, a wood and water stop. The box-car doors were closed while the engine crew replenished the tender. The wood-yard foreman strolled up, curious to know about the small train running on the schedule of the morning mail, with the mail's locomotive but none of the regular hands. Mr. Andrews had put on his silk hat in place of the cap he wore while the train was under way. This was a powder train, he said, being taken to General Beauregard, who was in a bad way for ammunition. The wood-yard foreman wished the powder-bearers luck.

Kingston was a good-sized town. The station platform was filled with people. The branch train for Rome was there, waiting for the Atlanta mail. Knight stopped alongside it and the Rome engineer called out:

"What's up? Fuller's engine and none of his men on board."

"I have taken this train by Government authority," said Andrews, "to run powder through to Beauregard." He waved his hand toward the box-cars in which his men were shut up.

The local freight was late. Andrews could get no information beyond that. Five minutes passed. Ten, fif-

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teen minutes. To the men in the dark box-cars they seemed like hours.

Mr. Andrews walked up and down the station platform. One or two persons recognized him and saluted respectfully. He would stop and chat for a moment, belittling the alarming stories of Mitchel's advance into Alabama. People spoke of his poise during the vexatious delay of the powder train.

Finally the freight came in. Andrews hastened to ask the conductor to pull up so that the powder train could move. The conductor was willing to oblige, but indicated a red flag on the end of his train. Another train was behind, made up, the freight conductor said, of everything on wheels that could be gleaned out of Mitchel's path. "And where," asked the conductor, "did you say you were to deliver this powder to Beauregard?" "At Corinth, Mississippi," repeated Andrews. "Why, you can't get through," explained the conductor. "Mitchel is on the line at Huntsville." Andrews said he did not believe it, but the trainman said he knew, having just come from there.

Twenty minutes, thirty minutes dragged by. Andrews patrolled the station platform within earshot of the telegraph key. With one hand he raised his tall hat in polite greeting. The other hand enclosed the butt of a pistol in the pocket of his long black coat. Any attempt to send a suspicious message and the telegraph operator would be a dead man. Andrews told Knight to get word to the men in the cars as to how the land lay and have them ready to fight.

Knight and his crew oiled their engine. An old switch tender who had spent a lifetime on Southern railroads hung around asking questions. The powder-train story did not concern him. The strange crew in the *General's* cab interested the veteran, whose mind

was an encyclopedia of Southern railway personnel. Where had they worked? Road? Division? Knight and his helpers answered in monosyllables. Fortunately Brown had once run a locomotive on the Mobile and Ohio, but there was no evading a certain discomfort in the old-timer's boring cross-examination.

Forty minutes is a long time to wait for a train under any circumstances. There was a whistle around the curve and Andrews met the refugee train as it pulled in, shouting directions for it to take its place on the already crowded sidings. This conductor also pointed to a red flag on his last car. The refugee train was running in two sections.

Fifty minutes. One hour—and a whistle that was music to the ears of twenty-two men. Section two rumbled in. Two regular trains from the north were now overdue. A prudent conductor would not have entertained a notion of leaving Kingston then. But Andrews said he would have to take the chance of passing the trains at Adairsville, ten miles farther on.

He waved for the switch admitting his train to the main line to be opened. But the old switch tender refused to budge. He had hung up his keys in the station and said that Andrews would have to show his authority to get them. The men inside the box-cars heard the old man's defiance and got their pistols ready. Not so the mannerly Mr. Andrews, whose life was filled with escapes from apprehensive moments. He laughed at the veteran's distemper and said he would get the keys. He did so, and the *General* was off after a delay of one hour and five minutes at Kingston, making in all an elapse of three hours and fifteen minutes from Big Shanty, thirty-two miles away.

"Push her, boys, push her," Andrews urged, and the *General* simply flew.

Well for Mr. Andrews that he had taken a chance and left for Adairsville. Four minutes after the *General* cleared the Kingston yards, a screaming whistle was heard from the south. The impatient passengers thought Fuller's train was coming and picked up their valises. It was Fuller—but he had not brought his train. The old *Yonah* rolled in, wheezing and blowing. Fuller swung off with the stunning story of the capture of the *General* at Big Shanty, and while the tracks were being cleared of the four trains congesting them, he managed to give a few of the details of his almost incredible pursuit.

At Big Shanty—now the town of Kenesaw—Fuller had just sat down to breakfast when a shout went up that his train had been stolen. He was on the platform in time to see the *General* and three box-cars glide around a curve. The station and camp were in an uproar. The dumfounded sentry stammered his story. It flashed on Fuller that the engine had been seized by deserters who would run it up the track for a few miles and take to the woods.

"Let's get her back before we are badly out of time," he shouted and, with Engineer Cain and Superintendent Murphy of the machine shops, started up the track at a dead run. Two miles out the three were winded and about to give up when they met the track gang whose tools Andrews had appropriated.

"If we can find the old *Yonah* at our end of the branch, we will get the scoundrels at Kingston where those extras will hold them up," said Fuller.

Before anyone could reply to this observation, push-car and riders, sailing down a grade, were pitched into a ditch, having struck a lifted rail.

The *Yonah* was overtaken just as she started to leave the main line. This old engine was full of complaints, but she had had her day, and on this day she turned back the calendar. The sixteen miles to Kingston were covered in thirteen minutes.

The crowd at the station told Fuller that his quarry had eluded him by four minutes. The conductor dashed into the telegraph office and sent a message north. He came back to the platform to hear the powder story, but, of course, did not learn that the "powder" cars were filled with armed men. Otherwise, he and his few helpers would have proceeded much more cautiously. The trains still were in a snarl on the tracks and, rather than lose any more time in switching, Fuller decided to abandon the *Yonah*. He uncoupled the engine of the Rome train and was off in a little better than six minutes, or about eleven minutes behind the Yankees.

The message telegraphed from Kingston did not get through because Andrews had stopped above the town in a blinding rain and cut the wires. Here the men also started to lift a rail, but their ineffective tools made clumsy work of it. Two-thirds of the rail was loose from the ties and the fugitives were about to give it up as a bad job, when the unmistakable whistle of a locomotive was heard from the south. Pursuit! It could be nothing else. The lifting of the rail became a matter of life or death. Most of the members of the party were large muscular men. They grasped the loose end of the rail, and with the strength born of peril heaved and pulled and heaved and pulled again. The iron rail snapped and the men tumbled in a heap. In an instant they were on their feet, in the cars and away.

At Adairsville the raiders were cheered by the sight of the south-bound freight waiting on the siding. At

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the depot Andrews received positive information that Mitchel held several miles of the railroad in Alabama. To Andrews, the Yankee raider, this was welcome news. To Andrews, the Confederate powder-train official, it presented complications. The story of the powder-train was rendered absurd on its face, but the marvelous address of the spy covered up the inconsistency long enough for him to get away. This took a little time, too. He tarried to reassure the freight crew and send them south with their trains. With the pursuers coming north, the freight going south, and a broken rail between them, Andrews expected his adversaries to be delayed long enough to give him the lead he needed.

To accomplish this he took further risks. The south-bound passenger train, following the freight, was overdue. The station officials advised Andrews to wait for it. Quite truthfully Andrews said he could not afford to wait, but he promised to run slowly, sending a flagman ahead on curves. Thus Andrews hoped to reach Calhoun, nine miles farther on, and deal with the passenger train there.

So as not to arouse suspicion, the *General* rolled cautiously away from the Adairsville depot. A quarter of a mile of this and Andrews told Knight to let her go.

7

The *Yonah*, ancient as she was, had been a faster locomotive than the engine Fuller took from the Rome train, but it was this fact—and an element of luck, as the conductor himself admitted—that averted disaster to the pursuit. Having struck one broken rail, he was on the lookout for others, although the rain made it almost impossible to see anything. Nevertheless Fuller

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did see, or thought he saw, where the track had been tampered with in time to have his engineer throw the engine into reverse and stop it on the brink of the gap.

The conductor leaped from the useless locomotive and, motioning to his men to follow again, started another footrace up the track, sliding and slipping in the mud. He had not gone far when he saw the through freight headed toward him. He flagged it down and backed it into Adairsville. The freight engine was the *Texas* and there was no better locomotive on the line. It was detached and with a small party of armed men started, tender forward, toward Calhoun.

Fuller believed he had the Yankees now. Andrews was thought to be running slowly for fear of colliding with the south-bound passenger train. If so, Fuller's quarry was boxed between two trains. But if Andrews had succeeded in reaching Calhoun before the passenger left, Fuller himself would risk a collision—unless he took care. Fuller did not take care. The scent was hot and he sent the *Texas* racing ahead.

8

To this day Knight probably holds the speed record between Adairsville and Calhoun, Georgia. The nine miles were behind the stolen engine in seven and one-half minutes—over a track on which safe running was reckoned to be sixteen miles per hour. At that the Andrews party escaped destruction by thirty seconds. The passenger train had just pulled out from the station when the wild *General* was seen roaring toward it. The two locomotives, screaming under the pressure of their brakes, were stopped within a few yards of each other. The passenger engineer was trembling with fright—and he was angry. He

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refused to back up and let Andrews pass. A crisis seemed at hand, for Andrews did not have a minute to lose, as he had not yet cut the wires beyond Adairsville.

The rain still fell. The passenger conductor came up to see what was the trouble. Andrews addressed him in a tone of authority. He said he had requested the removal of his passenger train in order that powder for the front might not be delayed. Now he had no alternative but to issue orders. Without a word the conductor obeyed.

The spraddling hamlet of Calhoun diminished in the distance and the Yankees breathed more easily. Sergeant Major Ross had been right about a day's delay altering things. Yesterday it would have been smooth sailing—no extra trains, no excitement on the line, the powder-train story perfection itself. By now the raiders should have been near their triumphant journey's end. But today difficulties had been encountered only to be overcome. Five trains passed, a pursuit shaken off by a matter of minutes, and now they were on the main line once more with an open road ahead and a broken track behind.

9

Fuller covered the nine miles to Calhoun in ten minutes—which still leaves the Yankee Knight in possession of the record, however. The passenger train was still waiting. One scare in a day had been enough for the engineer. Andrews had tried vainly to send him on his way, which would certainly have been the end of Conductor Fuller. Instead, the raider's Nemesis, saved by another stroke of luck, rushed the *Texas*, running backward, out of Calhoun, Fuller himself perched on

the tender where he could get a better view of the track.

The *General* and crew were within a few minutes of the first bridge to be burned—a covered wooden structure over the Oostanaula River. Here Andrews planned to render his success secure. He stopped a couple of miles in front of the bridge to cut wires and take up track. While some of the men tugged at a rail, others collected wood to fire the bridge. This would not be easy as the downpour continued and everything was soaking wet. The toiling rail crew was having its usual difficulties when they saw a sight that would not have startled them more had it been a ghost. A locomotive whistled and hove in view, burning up the track from the south. For the first time during the chase, Fuller sighted his quarry. Those at the rail yanked like men possessed. They could not break the rail, but they bent a yard of it some inches out of line. That seemed sufficient to wreck any train and the men jumped into the box-cars and the *General* started off.

It did not, however, wreck the mysterious pursuer. As far as the fugitives could see, the oncoming engine shot over the bent rail as if nothing was wrong. On the tender Fuller had been so engrossed in observing the men in possession of the *General* that he overlooked the rail until it was too late to stop. Actually the rail had nearly thrown the pursuing crew from the cab and they thought they were lost. Not until afterward did they learn how fortunate they had been. The bent rail was on the inside of a curve and the weight of the swiftly moving engine was on the outside rail. The bent rail simply straightened and the train kept on the track.

As for the Yankees, all their chances of getting

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away now depended on firing the bridge, and Andrews attempted a dramatic expedient to gain time for that. He reversed the *General* and charged his pursuers. When going full tilt the rear box-car was uncoupled, and the *General* was started forward leaving the box-car to continue the assault.

The bridge was reached. On a fair day a little oil and a faggot or two would have finished it, but it was raining harder than ever. Every stick of wood was soaked and the men kept their pistol ammunition dry with difficulty. Nevertheless a fire was kindled and coaxed to burn in one of the remaining cars. The plan was to leave the car in flames on the covered wooden bridge, but before the fire seemed the least encouraging here came the pursuers—pushing the raider's box-car in front of them. The Southerners had had some more luck. On a down grade the flying box-car might have driven them back for miles. But the hard-pressed Andrews was compelled to let it go on a level stretch. Fuller had simply reversed the *Texas* for a short distance, and, when the car slowed down, coupled it on and renewed the chase. When he came in sight of the bridge, Andrews was forced to flee, and, for the first time, a feeling that the fates were not on their side overtook the Union adventurers.

Certainly all the advantages of chance had gone against Andrews. Still, Fuller's pursuit had been intelligent and daring and he had made no mistakes. None can question the daring of Andrews, but he had made a grave mistake in not destroying the *Yonah*.

On the bridge the *Texas* picked up the smoking car that Andrews had tried to convert into a firebrand. Both cars were sidetracked at Reseca, a station a few hundreds yards beyond the bridge.

Passing Reseca the *General* did not run very fast.

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It was plain that there was no eluding the *Texas* by speed alone. The Yankees tried wrecking her. As there was no time to stop and dismantle the track, a hole was rammed in the rear end of the remaining box-car, and ties and sticks of fire-wood were dropped out in the hope of obstructing a rail. The wood showed a maddenning disposition to roll off the track, but now and then a piece stayed on and Fuller was forced by the protests of his men to slow up.

The desperate expedient was effective as long as the wood lasted, but presently it was all gone, except a few sticks which were crammed into the fire-box for a sprint to the next woodyard. There about half a load had been thrown aboard when the *Texas* hove in sight, but fuel was so precious that the men continued to pile it on and Fuller had to check speed to avert a collision. Before the hard-pressed *General* pulled out, Andrews' men had made a barrier of ties across the track, and, while Fuller removed it, the fugitives gained a few minutes' headway in their race to the water tank a few miles farther, for the *General's* boilers were almost dry. When the *General* left the water tank, the *Texas* was again in view.

Andrews was now ten or twelve miles from Dalton, which was a large town with a complicated arrangement of switches. Somehow the hard-pressed Yankees must gain a few minutes to take care of possible delays there. It was also equally important to cut the wires before a message could get into Dalton to raise enemies in his path. A tremendous spurt was made. Then a sudden stop by throwing the engine into reverse. Before the wheels had ceased to revolve, the diminutive Scott was out of the car and up a pole. Another party was building a barrier across the track. Another was frantically trying to wrench up a rail.

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Corporal Pittenger, a young law student who had got in the army with difficulty because of his thick spectacles, approached Mr. Andrews.

"We can capture that train if you are willing," said he.

"How?" asked Andrews.

Without hesitating for a word the corporal outlined an excellent plan of attack. "Block the track and place our party in ambush. Run our engine out of sight to disarm suspicion. When they stop to remove the obstruction we'll seize their engine and reverse it against any other trains that may be in this pursuit."

Mr. Andrews said nothing for a moment. "It is a good plan," he conceded. "It is worth trying." He glanced about as if studying the landscape. His survey was interrupted by the inevitable whistle of the pursuers. His glance shifted to the men who were vainly straining to force the rail.

"All aboard, boys," he called, and the dash to Dalton began.

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The *Texas* was not in sight when the *General* halted a hundred yards in front of the Dalton depot, which was a large structure with a shed enclosing the track. Several local railwaymen came up. The powder story was useless now—what with one battered car which had been literally peeled for fire-wood and a company of correspondingly battered men. Andrews dropped from the cab to see if the switches were set for a clear track. They appeared to be. "I am running this train through to Corinth," he called out in general acknowledgement of a flood of inquiries, and signaling Knight to proceed, caught on the engine step as it passed.

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The *General* tore through the station shed and through the town to the great consternation of the citizens of Dalton. This consternation had not diminished when, five minutes later, Fuller's *Texas* rolled in, merely slowing up to drop a man who bolted like a shot from a gun and literally fell upon the telegrapher's key.

At the same instant, a mile from Dalton, in plain sight of a Confederate regiment, John Scott was climbing a telegraph pole. One minute later the wire was cut, putting a period where no period was intended in Conductor Fuller's message from Dalton. But this much got through:

"GEN LEADBETTER COMMANDER AT CHATTANOOGA. MY TRAIN CAPTURED THIS A M AT BIG SHANTY EVIDENTLY BY FEDERAL SOLDIERS IN DISGUISE. THEY ARE MAKING RAPIDLY FOR CHATTANOOGA POSSIBLY WITH THE IDEA OF BURNING . . ."

The Chattanooga commandant understood. What chance now for Andrews and his band? Every mile of flight from Fuller brought them a mile nearer to the open arms of the awaiting Leadbetter.

Some distance from Dalton the road passed through a tunnel. Here was the place to turn and fight if they were ever to do it. But Andrews signaled to keep on. He meant to stake everything on the destruction of the Chickamauga River bridge. He ordered a fire built in the remaining box-car. This was hard to do. The car had been picked clean. Inside and out it was wet, and rain was still falling in torrents.

By drawing on the last quart of oil and almost the last stick of fire-wood a blaze was started. It crackled encouragingly and the spirits of the men rose with it. The little train stopped under the shelter of the bridge. As the oil burned from the surface of the wet wood

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the fire drooped a little. Still, the interior of the bridge shed was fairly dry, and given time the flames in the car would do their work.

A fire always holds an attraction, and, as this fire meant so much to its guardians, they half forgot their peril, and tarried to watch it. It was midday and the strain since dawn had been great. It was worth the price to relax. If the fire failed a few minutes would not matter.

The blaze picked up again. It took possession of the car, and tongues of flame licked the half-dry timbers of the bridge. No one had said a word for what might have been a full moment when the lookout called that the smoke of the *Texas* was in sight.

The burning car was uncoupled rather deliberately, and one of Andrew's men, who was brave enough to tell the truth, said that his heart sank. The *General* limped through the village of Ringgold. Wood was gone and oil was gone, but Andrews dared not stop.

Fuller picked up the blazing car on the bridge and dropped it at Ringgold. A few miles from there he sighted the Yankees drilling along at fifteen miles an hour. They were burning their own clothing to keep moving, and the journals on their engine were melting from want of oil. Their last fragment of hope was a wood-yard several miles away.

Fuller guessed their straits and their plan, but he lagged behind. He knew that he was dealing with men who would be desperate at bay. With the whole country behind him aroused and other engines in pursuit by now, Fuller felt no call to precipitate a battle.

The *General's* speed fell to eight miles an hour and Fuller slacked accordingly, keeping a good quarter to half a mile in the rear.

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Knight said he could not make the wood-yard. Andrews did not delay his decision.

"Jump and scatter, men, and be quick."

The men began to jump, rolling over and over until they vanished in the dripping woods beside the right-of-way. When all were off Knight reversed the engine and jumped. The old *General* moved off toward the pursuers, but the steam was too low for it to obtain any speed. Fuller simply reversed, ran back away and let the *General* come up gradually and couple on.

A troop train which had joined the pursuit was soon on the spot and the country was smothered with searchers under orders to take the "train thieves," dead or alive.

All were taken, the captures requiring from a few hours to ten days.

Nothing the soldiers of the North did during the war aroused the South to a greater pitch than the exploit of these twenty-one men. The newspaper *Southern Confederacy* of Atlanta declared the preservation of the railroad bridges a victory equal to Bull Run. "The mind and heart sink back at the bare contemplation of the consequences that would have followed the success" of the raid. It resulted in a reorganization of railroad administration in the South.

Mr. Andrews left his bones in Dixie. He was hanged in Atlanta, ten days before the date set for his wedding. When his Kentucky fiancée read an account of it in a newspaper, the shock killed her.

The following week seven others were executed, but the sudden thrust of a Federal column interrupted the court-martial of their fourteen comrades, eight of whom eventually escaped and reached the Union pickets. By this time the cry for vengeance had modulated and a few Southerners went so far as to show publicly

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their admiration for the Yankees' valor. A year later the six who remained in Confederate hands were exchanged for their weight in important political prisoners held by the North. President Lincoln received them at the White House and listened to an account of their adventures.

"A little luck with the battles now and the war will be over," he said.

The Far and The Near

BY THOMAS WOLFE

THE FAR AND THE NEAR

On the economic scene, the year 1929 will live in memory as the year of the Wall Street crash and the beginning of the blackest and longest depression this country has ever experienced. On the literary scene it marked the publication of Thomas Wolfe's Look Homeward, Angel, the book which won for its author instant recognition as a new giant of American letters. As though recognizing his kinship with the depression, Thomas Wolfe resigned his comfortable position as a member of the English faculty of New York University to prowel the low places of the city. Here he recorded life as it was lived under the economic conditions of that day, writing millions of words on his experiences and observations so that a few hundred thousand, which might shed light on human behavior, might be salvaged. Utilizing his typical, driving style, Thomas Wolfe gave some vivid impressions of railroading in his volume Of Time and the River. However, his most effective work on the railroad was his little short story, "The Cottage by the Railroad," which originally appeared in Cosmopolitan and was later included in his collection of short stories From Death to Morning as "The Far and the Near." Wolfe's great human sensitivity is evidenced in this story, as in an uncommon restraint of style which gives it a flavor unique among his works.

ON THE OUTSKIRTS of a little town upon a rise of land that swept back from the railway there was a tidy little cottage of white boards, trimmed vividly with green blinds. To one side of the house there was a garden neatly patterned with plots of growing vegetables, and an arbor for the grapes which ripened late in August. Before the house there were three mighty oaks which sheltered it in their clean and massive shade in summer, and to the other side there was a border of gay flowers. The whole place had an air of tidiness, thrift, and modest comfort.

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Every day, a few minutes after two o'clock in the afternoon, the limited express between two cities passed this spot. At that moment the great train, having halted for a breathing-space at the town near by, was beginning to lengthen evenly into its stroke, but it had not yet reached the full drive of its terrific speed. It swung into view deliberately, swept past with a powerful swaying motion of the engine, a low smooth rumble of its heavy cars upon pressed steel, and then it vanished in the cut. For a moment the progress of the engine could be marked by heavy bellowing puffs of smoke that burst at spaced intervals above the edges of the meadow grass, and finally nothing could be heard but the solid clacking tempo of the wheels receding into the drowsy stillness of the afternoon.

Every day for more than twenty years, as the train had approached this house, the engineer had blown on the whistle, and every day, as soon as she heard this signal, a woman had appeared on the back porch of the little house and waved to him. At first she had a small child clinging to her skirts, and now this child had grown to full womanhood, and every day she, too, came with her mother to the porch and waved.

The engineer had grown old and gray in service. He had driven his great train, loaded with its weight of lives, across the land ten thousand times. His own children had grown up and married, and four times he had seen before him on the tracks the ghastly dot of tragedy converging like a cannon ball to its eclipse of horror at the boiler head—a light spring wagon filled with children, with its clustered row of small stunned faces; a cheap automobile stalled upon the tracks, set with the wooden figures of people paralyzed with fear; a battered hobo walking by the rail, too

deaf and old to hear the whistle's warning; and a form flung past his window with a scream—all this the man had seen and known. He had known all the grief, the joy, the peril and the labor such a man could know; he had grown seamed and weathered in his loyal service, and now, schooled by the qualities of faith and courage and humbleness that attended his labor, he had grown old, and had the grandeur and the wisdom these men have.

But no matter what peril or tragedy he had known, the vision of the little house and the women waving to him with a brave free motion of the arm had become fixed in the mind of the engineer as something beautiful and enduring, something beyond all change and ruin, and something that would always be the same, no matter what mishap, grief or error might break the iron schedule of his days.

The sight of the little house and of these two women gave him the most extraordinary happiness he had ever known. He had seen them in a thousand lights, a hundred weathers. He had seen them through the harsh bare light of wintry gray across the brown and frosted stubble of the earth, and he had seen them again in the green luring sorcery of April.

He felt for them and for the little house in which they lived such tenderness as a man might feel for his own children, and at length the picture of their lives was carved so sharply in his heart that he felt that he knew their lives completely, to every hour and moment of the day, and he resolved that one day, when his years of service should be ended, he would go and find these people and speak at last with them whose lives had been so wrought into his own.

That day came. At last the engineer stepped from a train onto the station platform of the town where these

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two women lived. His years upon the rail had ended. He was a pensioned servant of his company, with no more work to do. The engineer walked slowly through the station and out into the streets of the town. Everything was as strange to him as if he had never seen this town before. As he walked on, his sense of bewilderment and confusion grew. Could this be the town he had passed ten thousand times? Were these the same houses he had seen so often from the high windows of his cab? It was all as unfamiliar, as disquieting as a city in a dream, and the perplexity of his spirit increased as he went on.

Presently the houses thinned into the straggling outposts of the town, and the street faded into a country road—the one on which the women lived. And the man plodded on slowly in the heat and dust. At length he stood before the house he sought. He knew at once that he had found the proper place. He saw the lordly oaks before the house, the flower beds, the garden and the arbor, and farther off, the glint of rails.

Yes, this was the house he sought, the place he had passed so many times, the destination he had longed for with such happiness. But now that he had found it, now that he was here, why did his hand falter on the gate; why had the town, the road, the earth, the very entrance to this place he loved turned unfamiliar as the landscape of some ugly dream? Why did he now feel this sense of confusion, doubt and hopelessness?

At length he entered by the gate, walked slowly up the path and in a moment more had mounted three short steps that led up to the porch, and was knocking at the door. Presently he heard steps in the hall, the door was opened, and a woman stood facing him.

And instantly, with a sense of bitter loss and grief, he was sorry he had come. He knew at once that the

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woman who stood there looking at him with a mistrustful eye was the same woman who had waved to him so many thousand times. But her face was harsh and pinched and meager; the flesh sagged wearily in sallow folds, and the small eyes peered at him with timid suspicion and uneasy doubt. All the brave freedom, the warmth and the affection that he had read into her gesture, vanished in the moment that he saw her and heard her unfriendly tongue.

And now his own voice sounded unreal and ghastly to him as he tried to explain his presence, to tell her who he was and the reason he had come. But he faltered on, fighting stubbornly against the horror of regret, confusion, disbelief that surged up in his spirit, drowning all his former joy and making his act of hope and tenderness seem shameful to him.

At length the woman invited him almost unwillingly into the house, and called her daughter in a harsh shrill voice. Then, for a brief agony of time, the man sat in an ugly little parlor, and he tried to talk while the two women stared at him with a dull, bewildered hostility, a sullen, timorous restraint.

And finally, stammering a crude farewell, he departed. He walked away down the path and then along the road toward town, and suddenly he knew that he was an old man. His heart, which had been brave and confident when it looked along the familiar vista of the rails, was now sick with doubt and horror as it saw the strange and unsuspected visage of an earth which had always been within a stone's throw of him, and which he had never seen or known. And he knew that all the magic of that bright lost way, the vista of that shining line, the imagined corner of that small good universe of hope's desire, was gone forever, could never be got back again.

The Man
Who Confessed

BY FRANK L. PACKARD

THE MAN WHO CONFESSED

Few writers have carved as many fiction reputations for themselves as Frank Lucius Packard. In the detective and mystery field, his famous Jimmie Dale stories are legend and part of the colorful background of that field. In tales of red-blooded adventure, another of his characters, Shanghai Jim, attained a repute almost as universal. In the stories involving those characters, Frank L. Packard showed that he was not only a master story teller, but had the feel of humanity which made his characters come alive on the printed page. These assets he carried over into his tales of the rails; this human touch, coupled with his background in railroading, has made him one of the "greats" of railroad fiction. His reputation rests solidly on three collections: On the Iron at Big Cloud, Running Special, and The Night Operator. Above all, Packard was a story teller, and fully as important, he was a real railroad man. Packard worked for years in the Canadian Pacific shops, absorbing a wealth of background material which is reflected in his stories. Born of American parents in Montreal in 1877, and having worked on a Canadian railroad, Packard deals primarily with American western and Canadian railroading. In "The Man Who Confessed", Packard shows to the best advantage the easy conversational writing style, the human elements, and that great knowledge of railroads which have won for him his important place in this category of fiction.

THE HILL DIVISION never had time to say Bartholomew all at once, hence Barty—Barty McClung. Barty, like Shanley, was a relic, so to speak, of a wreck—specifically, the Spider Cut wreck, where Flannagan, the wrecking boss, picked him out of the débris of one of the day coaches. Barty at the time, however, was

quite oblivious to Flannagan's attentions and everything else—so obviously so that Flannagan laid him down amongst the silent forms on that section of the embankment reserved for those to whom all ministering was at an end.

Barty McClung, however, was not dead, though he was perilously near to it. Doctor McTurk said that by all the rules of the game he ought to have been; the Hill Division said that any man whose skull wasn't double-plated sheet-iron and copper-riveted would have been; and Barty, when he got around to the stage where he could grin, grinned and said he'd been in worse wrecks than that before when he had been firing back on the Penn—and showed his "card" to prove it; that is, to prove he'd been firing on the Penn.

The grin through the pain and the bandages got Regan where the master mechanic's heart was soft—which was all over—and he took Barty McClung right under his wing from the start.

Regan wanted to know if Barty was married, or had been, or had any children back East to send messages to.

Barty said he hadn't kith or kin on earth so far as he knew.

Regan wanted to know what Barty was doing out West.

Barty said he was on a holiday.

Regan said: "H'm!"—reached into his hip pocket for his chewing, bit off a piece, spat out an offending branch of stalk, and offered Barty a job—firing.

"As well West as East," said Barty—and he took it.

And that's the way Barty McClung came to the Hill Division.

Perhaps Regan let his kindly feelings run away with

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him; perhaps he took too much for granted, accepted McClung too much on his own cognisance, as it were—perhaps he did—there were a good many who said so before it was over, besides Johnnie Dawes, who said so all the time.

Dawes? Dawes was a wiper in the roundhouse and—but we'll come to Johnnie Dawes in a moment.

Anyway, whether Regan took too much for granted or whether he didn't, Barty McClung went to firing for Steve Patch on the 608, with the local freight run between Big Cloud and Loon Dam.

McClung made good from the start—even Steve Patch said so—and there wasn't a harder man pulling a latch on the division to get along with than Steve. Generally speaking, three trips with the shovel was about all any man would make with Steve, if he could inveigle Regan or some one else in authority to shift him to another run. Steve Patch was credited with a grouch of exactly the same age as Steve Patch himself—Steve having been born with it, so his numerous firemen said. However, be that as it may, the engineer was swearing by his new mate at the end of a week—and at the end of a month there was nothing to it at all but Barty McClung.

Nor was Steve Patch the only one who swore by Barty. Barty got under the vests of the roundhouse crowd and the engine-crews quicker than any new man before or since had ever done on the Hill Division—not because Steve Patch sang his praises—far from it—with any other than Barty, Steve's encomiums might not have proved an unmixed blessing. The men liked Barty because he was—Barty.

It was natural enough. Well set-up and quick as an athlete in every movement; brains in his head, railroad brains, the kind they liked and understood; gray

eyes with a smile in them even when there wasn't any smile on his lips; and a grip of the hand that made you squeeze back hard—that was Barty. Not very old, still young enough to be enthusiastic; and you hadn't to look at him more than once grooming around with a hunk of waste to know that the cab of an engine meant a whole lot to Barty McClung.

Regan pulled on his scraggly brown moustache—and smiled. Regan was pleased. If there was anything on earth the fat, jolly little master mechanic loved, it was to see a man make good—and his delight didn't lose any of its intensity because the man in question happened, so to speak, to be a find of his own. Why should it?

In a month everybody was pulling for Barty McClung—except Johnnie Dawes. Johnnie Dawes hated Barty from the moment he saw the new man poke his nose through the roundhouse doors. But that was Dawes' way—Dawes didn't have a mean streak in him, he was *all* mean, all the way up and back again; and, to top that, he had a habit of screwing up his mouth when he talked, and talking mostly beneath his breath in a sneaking, confidential kind of a way that made you feel he was trying to make an accomplice out of you in some infernal felony every time he opened his lips. Not popular? No; not very! Not the pleasantest kind of an enemy, though—tritely, a snake in the grass.

Johnnie Dawes had wined quite a few years in the roundhouse. Once, soon after he had started, he was promoted and given an engine to fire. The night he was to take her out he celebrated his promotion by getting riotously drunk: the next day the thud with which he returned to wiping appeared to offer another suitable occasion for another celebration—which

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Dawes took. He had been wiping ever since—except for lay-offs, a good many of them, of a month or two at a stretch—at Regan's request. As far as seniority went he was entitled to the left-hand side of a cab instead of a new man, Barty McClung, or any other—in that he was right.

Johnnie Dawes put it up to Regan.

"I've been wiping for years, Regan," he stated tentatively, with an ingratiating smirk.

"After a fashion," admitted Regan.

Dawes grew belligerent.

"You put a new man on over my head," he spluttered. "What do you know about him—eh? Who is he? Lands up here in a wreck. That's all you know. And you put him on!"

The little master mechanic eyed the big, hulking wiper up and down sort of reminiscently—and expectorated black-strap thoughtfully into the engine pit at his side.

"The point is, Johnnie, that I know *you*," said Regan quietly—and walked out of the roundhouse.

This didn't help the state of Johnnie Dawes' feelings any. In some ways Dawes was human; chance after chance Regan had given him, and he owed the master mechanic more than he owed to any other man on earth—so, because he owed Regan so much, he liked Regan very little. This was another grievance against McClung—not that any more were really needed—McClung was a pet, Regan's pet.

There wasn't any open friction between McClung and Dawes—not at first. Dawes had, not respect, but a certain fear of public opinion, in which McClung was strongly entrenched. So Dawes, for the spite that was in him, started in to undermine public opinion and switch it his way. Not that Johnnie Dawes conceived

the strategy he adopted through any hobnobbing with logic—quite the reverse. He had not, premeditatively, even meant to put that phase of it up to Regan—it had simply come into this head on the spur of the moment, and he had blurted it out. Once there, however, it stuck, and, on being turned over in his mind a bit, seemed to Johnnie Dawes to offer a promising field for attack. Johnnie Dawes, in that unpleasant, confidential voice of his, as though he hinted at some monumental and blood-curdling secret, began to ask the engine crews and the roundhouse the question he had asked Regan.

“What do you know about McClung—eh? Except that he came out of a wreck?”

For his trouble the Hill Division laughed at him; and then, perhaps a little to Dawes’ own astonishment, certainly to his utter and unhallowed satisfaction, he fell upon something that warranted what he was pleased to consider his perspicacity—or, at least, he thought he did.

It didn’t get around to Barty’s ears for quite a while, not for another month or so, for the very simple reason that the engine crews and the roundhouse weren’t men mean enough to throw it at McClung, and Dawes was too little of any kind of a man to say it to Barty’s face. In a way, perhaps, it didn’t do Barty any harm, for Barty, as the days went by, kept going up, way up, in the estimation of everybody, in spite of Johnnie Dawes, and—but there’s our “clearance” now!

That’s the way things stood when, after Barty McClung had been a matter of some three months on the Hill Division, Regan, pleased at any chance to promote a man, gave the 608 combination, Steve Patch and Barty McClung, a big sixteen-hundred class en-

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gine, one of the swellest cabs on the roster of the Hill Division—the 1609; and, with it, one of the fast passenger runs.

A grouch Steve Patch might have, but he was an engineer from the ground up, with a year of service for pretty near every grease spot on his overalls; and, with a record as clean as the glistening slide-bars of the new giant mountain racer, the promotion was no more than his due. And Barty McClung—well Barty, apart from being Steve's fireman anyhow, was a fireman in a thousand. Regan chuckled deep down. There wasn't any other master mechanic, not on *their* system, that could line up a team like that—the 1609 and its whirlwind schedule, with Steve Patch and Barty McClung.

Regan bubbled all over with pride, and bit prodigiously on his plug the day he promoted the men, and watched the 1609, smooth as velvet, grace and beauty in every line, glide out of the roundhouse that late afternoon; watched while Steve balanced the 'table with an art that brought a yell from the roundhouse doors, and then, leaning far out from the cab window, big with delight, backed down to couple on to the shining string of coaches, the fastest train he had ever pulled in his life, for the run west through the mountains.

In the cab, Steve for the moment forgot his chronic grouch; and Barty whistled happily like a kid out of school, as he surveyed his surroundings. Both men were excited a little bit. Perhaps there was reason for it—it meant something, this did, to a railroad man—and both of them were that. And then, besides, it was a sort of gala occasion. The super's car was on the tail end; and some of the Big Fellows, Harvey, the division engineer, Kline, superintendent of bridges for

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the entire system, and Riley, the trainmaster, were going up with Carleton for an inspection trip over the division.

As they rolled out of Big Cloud with Steve Patch bulking through the cab window and Barty hanging in the gangway, Regan, who had followed them over to the platform, threw a last word at his star engine crew.

"And if you can't make time with that," sputtered Regan, blinking hard, and embracing the 1609 with an eloquent sweep of his hand, "I'll set you both back wiping—where you'd belong!"

And Steve and Barty grinned at him. Make time! Was there any doubt of it?

Strange the way things come about sometimes, isn't it? Railroading's a queer business; not that life in any calling isn't full of contrasts, and contrasts sharp and bitter too, but the smiles and tears somehow seem to meet head-on oftener on the rails than anywhere else, and do it quicker—sudden as the crack of doom.

The Hill Division remembers that night—the 1609 with Steve Patch and Barty McClung in the cab, and the super's private car carrying the tail-lights. But, most of all, it remembers Riley, the trainmaster—Riley, one of the old school, from section hand up to braking, braking to carrying a punch, punch to trainmaster, and pure grit all the way. One of the best of them Riley, he was perhaps more at home with a share of Steve Patch's bumping seat in the cab than he was with the plush and velvet upholstery of the private car, and the higher mathematics Harvey and Kline started throwing at each other over a disputed point in bridge design, for, after dark, at a stop for water, Riley dropped off the private car, walked up forward,

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climbed into the cab, and—but there's a word or two comes before that.

Barty hadn't said much; it seemed to be all kind of sinking in while he got acquainted with the 1609 and the fast run. He had sprinkled the grate-bars craftily, cocked his eye at the gauge—and discovered that he was not called upon to exercise half the craft he knew to fire the 1609. But it was not until darkness was beginning to fall, shading the lower levels and valleys while the snow-crowned peaks of the Rockies still gleamed and glistened white through the clear, crisp air, and they were well into the heart of things, twisting and turning and climbing the grades, and he had snapped on the electric headlight and the electric bulbs over the water-glass and gauges, that Barty walked over to Steve Patch—you could *walk* in that cab.

"Say, Steve," he bellowed over the roar, "there's nothing on wheels has anything on us—eh? We're a regular Pullman! Electric lights in the cab—wow! She's the last word, Steve—and she's *ours*."

Patch, suddenly aroused to the fact that his attitude, demeanor and expression were possibly almost cheerful, screwed around in his seat, and his wooden old face hardened.

"She's so blamed stiff," he lied with a growl, "that an elephant couldn't move the reverse. And why in blazes don't you keep your steam up!"

Barty glanced at the gauge. The needle quivered and glistened under the bulb just where it had been from the first clang of his shovel—a full head, even on the grade. And then Barty grinned—and did what no other man in a cab could do with Steve Patch. Barty brought the palm of his hand down with a re-

sounding whack on the engineer's shoulders—and grinned again.

Steve Patch tried hard not to—but for all that Steve Patch grinned back, and impulsively shoved out his hand.

Barty grabbed it. The two had come to think a good deal of each other, and a grip like that didn't carry any jolly business with it.

"Steve," shouted Barty, "you've got just where I want to get—pulling a latch on a fast run. I guess I've always wanted to do that ever since I was a kid—as far back as I can remember. I don't know, I feel kind of queer to-night—kind of as though for the first time it looked as though it was really coming true some day."

"Nothing to stop you on this division," growled Steve—and then Steve let it out. "Except Johnnie Dawes," he added.

"Johnnie Dawes?" repeated Barty in surprise. "What's the matter with Dawes?"

"Nothing—except that he ain't dead," snapped the engineer. "That's the only thing anybody's got against him. If I was you I'd bash his face for him good and plenty."

"What is it, Steve?" asked Barty quietly. "I'm not on."

"Well," said Patch, "to my way of thinking, which is different mabbe from the rest of the boys', it's time you was. The dirty skunk is shooting his mouth around that you ain't out here with a clean bill of health."

Barty seemed to brace himself a little against the lurch of the cab, and the smile on his lips sort of thinned out.

"Go on, Steve," he prompted.

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"Ain't much to go on about, nothing for that matter," returned the engineer savagely. "That's why I'm telling you to give him what he's asking for. Says you claimed you was just out here on a holiday, and he says it's queer you ain't had no word nor nothing from anybody back where you came from, and don't send none yourself, either—letters, he means. Old Hicks, in his little two by twice postoffice, is another just like him, and I suppose that's where he got his dope from."

Barty was staring out through the cab glass ahead to where the headlight, sweeping from the rails as they swung a curve, lit up the foaming, bubbling narrows of the Glacier River close against the right of way. And this time Barty made no answer.

Over the roar of the train came the roar of the rapids—then the bark of the exhaust, full, deep-toned, resonant—the whistling wind, the trucks beating the fishplates, the give and take of axle-play, the steam purring at the gauges in the cab.

A minute, two, three went by—not a word between them. A wrinkle crept into Steve's old wooden face, and trouble into the hard gray eyes under the bushy brows that softened them.

Steve broke the silence.

"Is there anything you'd like to tell me, Barty—being mates—you and me?" He asked the question with his eyes riveted on the forward notch of the segment as though quite fascinated by it.

Barty started, looked for a moment at the engineer, hesitated—then smiled.

"No; nothing, Steve," he said, reaching for his shovel. "A fellow doesn't pay any attention to a thing like that, does he? It isn't worth while. I should think

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there'd be quite a few out here besides me who don't get any letters—from anywhere."

"Sure," said Steve Patch with gruff assertiveness, stealing an anxious glance at Barty as the fireman turned away. "Sure there are, Barty."

Barty pulled his door, sprinkled the fire, and went over to his seat. Steve, muttering earnest blasphemy under his breath, kept his eyes ahead. The uplift all seemed to have oozed out of the cab. And when they pulled up for water at the Beaver Tank, it was a relief to both of them to see Riley, the burly trainmaster, hoist himself in through the gangway.

Riley, with his big laugh down deep in him that was all Riley's own, shoved Steve Patch forward in his seat with a punch in the ribs to make room for himself, and—but this is not Riley's story, save only so far as fate, with what seemed like an extra grim twist, should have brought Riley into the cab of the 1609 with Barty McClung that night; that and, of course, what came after.

When it was all over nobody knew how it happened. Haley, the rear-end brakeman of Extra Freight No. 43, westbound, swore that he threw the switch all the way over for the mainline after his train had taken the siding at Hurley's Falls to wait for the express to pass her. But Haley's record had a bad mark or two against it for carelessness. It's possible he told the truth—his conductor backed him up—and if that was so the 1609's pony truck simply jumped the switch; that was the only other solution. However, one way or the other, in results it made little difference—the spill was at Hurley's Falls.

Riley climbed into the cab at the Beaver Tank. Hurley's Falls, the first section west, lies in the Elk River valley, the eastern approach to which is a nasty

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bit of track—a cut through walls of enormous height where the right of way comes down from the upper levels in a stiffish grade, indulging the while in gyrations that are like the wriggings of some earth-worm burrowing through for the open. It is only a small matter, that particular section of track, when it comes to mileage, but it is one that is held in respect in the cabs of the Hill Division and is negotiated with caution.

Steve slowed as they opened the cut, and with a roar, deafening as a clap of thunder, the 1609 nosed into the maw of towering rock walls and became engulfed, immersed, buried and hidden, as it were, in the bowels of the earth. Far up above, as though a narrow rift in the roof of a tunnel, showed a scintillating star; in front of the pilot gray rock leaped into form and menace at every twist of the track, quick enough and near enough to have sent a man's heart into his mouth more than once on his first run, as the headlight shot the projections into cold, sullen, threatening relief.

Barty swung the furnace door, and the crimson glow filled the big cab and swirled skyward like a huge canopy of fire to light up the night. Steve was far forward in his seat, motionless as a statue, crouched, with his head a little out-flung from his body, his eyes never shifting from the glistening rails, his hands on "air" and throttle. Behind him Riley smiled, his big body tucked and braced against the frame of the cab.

And then, as Barty returned to his seat, Steve relaxed a little—they were around the last curve, almost through the cut, and opening the straight again. In a moment, with the rock walls behind them, they would see the lights of Hurley's Falls station.

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The roar and thunder died suddenly, by contrast, to a breathless silence—only long echoing reverberations behind—they were into the clear.

Came leaping at them from a quarter of a mile ahead the twinkling lights, switch and station, and the tail-lights of the waiting freight.

"Green on the east-end switch," Barty called across the cab.

Green? Yes. There was never any question about that. Haley, at least, had made a pretence at throwing the switch—and far enough to show the green.

"Green. All Clear," Steve answered back—and began to open up the 1609.

With a snort, as though impatient at previous restraint, the big mountain racer jumped forward into her stride again. Barty pulled his watch. They were on time—if anything, a minute to the good.

Quicker came the exhausts, quicker and quicker, as the 1609 reached forward; came again the whistling rush of wind, the sway and swing of the trailing coaches, the whir of the flying drivers, the short stack volleying the red sparks heavenward in a steady stream—Steve was picking up his schedule again.

How fast? Crazy fast—but what, concretely, does it matter? Too fast to avert the horror and disaster that yawned, a pit of death, ahead of the pilot quicker than a man could think. One instant, sweeping down the straight, rights over every mortal thing on earth—and the next, the pony truck of the 1609 hit the switch, and with a lurch, sickening as the pitch of a liner to the hollow of the sea, swerved, wrenched and swung from the mainline onto the siding.

Flung from his seat, Barty gained his feet, and got a single glance through the cab glass ahead—there was no time for more than that—just a glance at the

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tail-lights on Extra No. 43's caboose a bare yard or so away.

Steve checked. Checked again—*hard*. And the steel flew fire, as, with a screech and shriek, like lost souls in pandemonium, the brake-shoes locked and bit and smoked, and the big racer quivered, moaning in every bolt.

What man could do, Steve Patch, gnarled old veteran of the rail, did then—but it was past all avail.

It takes long to tell it. It happened while a man passes his hand across his eyes—no longer than that—from the switch to the tail of the freight, no longer than that. As Barry regained his feet, and, by the gangway, shot that glance ahead, they were into it.

There was a terrific crash, a hiss and rend and grind of steam and wood and steel—and into the tail of the caboose plowed the 1609, into it and through it, cutting it as a knife cuts cheese, hurling debris in a rain of death about itself—into it, snapping away a flat coupled next to the caboose as a terrier snaps away a rat, and buried itself deep into the box-car next the flat, crumpling, buckling and telescoping a half dozen more beyond.

It was Riley, probably, who saved Barty McClung; not intentionally, Riley was past all that. Barty was standing in the gangway. Across the cab, full across it, hurled as a stone from a catapult, as a bullet from the muzzle of a gun, Riley was hurled with the shock, as the 1609 hit the tail of the caboose; and the train-master's body swinging through the air struck Barty McClung, tumbling the fireman in a heap out of the cab, plunging him to the ground.

For a moment, Barty knew nothing. And by all the laws of probability he should never have known anything again—but he picked himself up, bleeding

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from face and hands and with a wrenched shoulder, it is true, but otherwise unhurt. It was another moment though, several of them, before, stunned and dazed as he was, he could remember or understand what had happened. He sat down between the rails of the mainline track, holding his head in his hands, his body wobbling a little, trying to make out and piece together the scene before him.

Shouts, yells and cries came sounding from the head of the freight and from the direction of the station—and from behind, from the passenger coaches came screams. These sounds all seemed to obtrude themselves discordantly upon Barty's senses over a constant roar of escaping steam. Back along the mainline, just on the switch, the second-class smoker was slewed around obliquely to the right of way and lay on its side, and the end of a passenger coach had climbed up onto the smoker's vestibule—the cars behind that seemed to have held the rails. Before him, a dozen yards away, a yellow tongue of flame leaped viciously into life from where the 1609 was half buried under the wreckage. Barty rocked in his sitting posture, and, still holding his head, gazed at the scene from between his hands.

A man shook him by the shoulder—it was Brannigan, the passenger conductor, hatless, his wrist wrapped in a red-soaked handkerchief.

"Bad hurt, Barty?" Brannigan asked.

Barty looked at him a little blankly—and shook his head.

"Where's Steve?" shot out the conductor. "Did he jump?"

And then Barty came to his feet. Steve! Steve Patch, with his ugly old wooden face, and his grouch to hide a heart bigger than a woman's any time if

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only a man could find his way to it—as Barty had.

“No,” said Barty, and his voice sounded queer to himself. “Steve didn’t jump.”

“My God!” whispered Brannigan, in a low, reverent way.

But Barty didn’t hear him—Barty was running now in a stumbling sort of way toward the heart of the wreck, the cab of the 1609. He was conscious of forms racing up and down the track, many of them, and swinging, bobbing lanterns; but his eyes were fixed, strained on what he could see of the 1609—nothing else—just that.

It was a tangled mass of ruin that was banked in front of him, and the flames were licking at it wickedly; beyond, through the wreckage of the caboose that was piled over the drivers and heaped on the running board (for the 1609, canted up, lay half over now) the gangway step protruded at right angles—and inside there somewhere was his engineer. He swung toward it on the run—and again his shoulder was caught, this time in a tight grip. It brought him to a halt—and he looked into the super’s face, into “Roal” Carleton’s face with its clamped jaws and eyes bitter with the horror of it all.

“Don’t try that, McClung!” There was grim admiration blending with the finality in Carleton’s voice. “You’d never come out alive.”

“Why,” said Barty, in a strange, inconsequential way, “you see, Steve’s in there—and Riley, you know.”

“Yes. I know,” said Carleton—and he choked a little.

“Of course,” said Barty—and with a sudden wrench he shook Carleton’s arm from his shoulder and sprang away.

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Up he went, over the slithered, smoking timbers of the caboose—fighting through to the gangway of the 1609—and in. Hot, blistering steam closed upon him and immersed him. The cab was full of it. He could not stand upright and make his way to the right-hand side, to where he had last seen his engineer, because of the slant of the cab, so he dropped to his hands and knees and half crawled, half slid across the iron floor-plates, hot and wet now with the swirling steam—and brought up with a nasty bump against the segment and the engineer's seat.

There was no air, and he choked for his breath. And he could not see.

"Steve!" he called. And again: "Steve!"—and his voice trailed away in a moan from the torment that was upon him now.

There was no answer.

"Steve!"—it was a babbled word. And there was no answer. And the white cloud about him seemed to whip at him with a thousand merciless lashes, flaying with excruciating agony his raw flesh, his face, his neck, his hands—there was live steam somewhere near him, a jet of it. Over the drumming roar from the boiler, the crackle of burning timber from without as the flames biting into it now snapped fiercely, over a bedlam of shouts and cries, he could hear that hiss of steam, venomous as a serpent's.

Forward a bit he groped, groped blindly toward the "air" latch and the throttle—and then his hands touched something soft and yielding, and he began to pull and drag and tug with all his might.

Unconsciously, he was moaning now to himself continuously. Steve's leg was wedged between the forward end of the segment and where the seat there had been ripped and torn away from the cab frame.

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At first he could not budge the engineer, and his strength began to go, oozing away from him, sucked away by the deadly white cloud that enveloped him, and that seemed now to jeer at him, mock at him, taunt him as it hissed.

He worked frantically, madly, and panic came upon him—and then he fell flat to the flooring, the engineer's body on top of him, as resistance suddenly gave way.

Barty McClung began to cry, sobbing in an hysteria of relief—and the tears baked dry on his face. But he had Steve free now, and, pulling, lifting, struggling with the inert form, Barty won his engineer to the gangway—and a yell went up from a score of men as they caught sight of him outside.

It was over then—but Barty didn't remember anything more after that.

Later, they found Riley hunched in between the tender and the back of the cab. But Riley was dead—the grim old railroader had gone that night into the Great Terminal.

Others too? Yes. But this is Barty McClung's story—

They got Steve Patch back to Big Cloud on the first wreck special—a pretty complete wreck himself. But Steve was wooden apparently all over as well as his face. After a week, Steve's grouch began to show itself in fluent, growling pessimism, and they knew then that Steve would live.

Barty, with no worse than a few burns and a tender skin, was back in a cab on a local run from the start, waiting for Steve Patch to come out of bed and the 1609 to come out of the shops for the fast run again; and, on his hours off, Barty nursed Steve, or, rather, took his turn at it a little more frequently than any-

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body else, where, with no trained nurses, or hospital, or anything of that kind, everybody used to chip in and do the best they knew how.

When Steve got around to where he was fit to be told anything, they told him how Barty had gone back into the cab for him. Steve listened—and growled. And that night when Barty came on for a trick at nursing, when he would better have been getting a little sleep before going out on a midnight run, Steve cussed and growled at him with such hearty abandon over what he claimed was Barty's clumsiness with the bandages, and went so far out of his way to do it, that even for one of Steve Patch's grouch it was suspiciously overdone.

But Barty only grinned at him.

"Steve," said he, "do you think you're fooling yourself? You can't chase me out that way!"

Steve sort of gasped, then blinked fast; and into the rough, hard-tongued old engineer's eyes came something that no one had probably ever seen there before—Steve's eyes went suddenly wet.

"Barty," said he, "God bless you, boy."

And Barty's grin went out and he turned away his head, and walked to the window; and then, presently, for the sake of something to say while they were waiting for the cautionaries to drop and give them the clear, he asked the question that had been on everybody's tongue on the Hill Division ever since the wreck.

"Who's going to get the train crews in Riley's place, Steve? Heard anything about it? Brannigan's only filling in, isn't he?"

"Yes," said Steve. "That's all. Just filling in. I dunno who gets it, but when the super was in here to-day, him and Regan, they was speaking about some

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new man from somewhere that was going to sit in the first of the month. I dunno who he is, but he'll need to be a good one to fill Riley's shoes."

"Yes," agreed Barty; "but I guess no one'll kick at any man Carleton picks."

"No," agreed Steve Patch; "I guess no one'll holler on that score."

But in that they were wrong—both of them. It was to touch them both closer than they knew—and to prove a trump card for Johnnie Dawes, whose spite had soared in direct ratio as Barty's stock had soared after the Hurley's Falls wreck. It was the natural outcome—with a man like Johnnie Dawes. It couldn't have been any other way. Johnnie Dawes never had been in right with the Hill Division; he was in wrong now worse than ever. Barty McClung had proved himself, and there wasn't much room for any one who said, or who *had* said, which is more to the point, for Johnnie Dawes kept his mouth sullenly shut now, anything against a man who had pulled his engineer out of a ruck that the Hill Division generally was honest enough to admit it would have shied at doing itself. Therefore Johnnie Dawes, nursing his bottled-up spite, which curdled to hate, waited for the chance that he hoped would come to him—and took particular pains, having an eye to his physical welfare, to keep out of the fireman's road, putting a pit or two and an intervening engine between them whenever he and Barty McClung happened to be in the roundhouse together.

The weeks passed, nearly four of them, from the night of the Hurley's Falls wreck; and then there came the day, the last day of the month, when the 1609 came out of the shops again, and Steve came to her throttle again, and Barty to the left-hand side of the

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cab, and the engine and men were back on their run once more.

But the fates seemed against that particular all-star combination of the fat little master mechanic. First it was the 1609 and Steve together who were laid on the shelf, and then it was—Barty McClung. But they did better this time—they made a return run through the mountains without mishap, and on schedule to the dot. And then it happened.

It was close on noon the next day, which made it the first of the month, as they pulled into Big Cloud on the return run, and the 1609 backed in over the 'table into the roundhouse, and Steve, as they came to a stop, swung down from the gangway to the floor.

Barty, still in the cab, caught the sound of Carleton's voice as the engineer alighted, and over the purr of the steam caught snatches of what the super said:

"Steve, shake hands with . . . going to take the train crews, you know . . . the 1609 . . . want him to see something of the types we're using on the mountain runs. . . ."

Then Steve's uncompromising growl:

"Glad to know you."

It was the new trainmaster, of course. Barty edged over to the other side of the cab to get a look, but the new man was standing close up against the drivers under the cab and Barty couldn't see him. Then Steve, with no intention of letting his mate stay out in the cold while introductions or anything else were going around, shouted for Barty to come down. And Barty, swabbing his hands on a piece of clean waste that he snatched hurriedly from the engineer's box, jumped to the ground.

"Barty," said Steve, usurping the super's prerogative, "this is Mr. Calhoun, the new trainmaster."

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A short, stocky, grizzled-haired man, with close-cut moustache, stepped pleasantly forward, extended his hand, hesitated, drew his hand back, let it drop to his side, and a queer grim sort of an expression settled on his face.

"I've seen McClung before," he said shortly.

Nobody spoke for a moment. Johnnie Dawes, trailing the Big Fellows and playing for notice from Authority, was listening with both ears and absorbing the scene with both eyes from the nose of the pilot a little behind the group. Steve Patch, his jaw beginning to protrude defiantly, glared at the new trainmaster, swung to look at Barty McClung, and his jaw lost its belligerent jut and sagged instead—Barty was leaning against the tender, his eyes on his boots, a whiteness in his face that was creeping to his lips. Carleton, frowning perplexedly, looked from one to the other in turn.

And then Calhoun, with a nod to Steve Patch, turned to Carleton, said something in a low tone, and the two walked away and out of the roundhouse through the big engine doors without another word.

As they stepped out on the cinders around the turntable, the noon whistle blew—and Johnnie Dawes stepped out after them—pretty close after them.

"I discharged him for lifting fares," Johnnie Dawes heard Calhoun say to the super—and Johnnie Dawes streaked for the Blazing Star Saloon to spread the news.

In the roundhouse, old Steve Patch faced his fireman.

"What is it, boy?" he demanded gruffly—gruffly because he couldn't speak any other way, much less when he was excited.

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Barty McClung put out his hand to the engineer's shoulder and gripped it hard.

"Nothing you can help, Steve," he said in a low way. He jerked his head toward the 1609. "I guess I've made my last run with her. They all say a man can't 'come back', that they won't let him—but I didn't believe it. I guess it works out true though." Then abruptly: "I don't feel like talking now. I'm going up to the boarding house. I'll see you later." Then he smiled—and walked out of the roundhouse.

Steve watched him go, started to follow, stopped, swallowed the lump in his throat to make way for a rumble of muttered oaths—and hoisted himself up heavily into the cab to take off his overalls. Remembering that night in the cab just before the wreck, he knew that something was miserably wrong; that was all he knew then, and that was enough—but it wasn't long before he got the gist of it, just as everybody else did.

A bit of anything that can be turned into gossip when tacked on to a bit of news is like the tail tacked on to the kite—it makes it fly. And with Johnnie Dawes pulling the string the news flew. By the time noon hour was over everybody in Big Cloud had it—the men returning to work; and the women hurrying into each other's kitchens for fear somebody would get there before they did. Regan, for instance, who had been down the line, and, coming in a little after one o'clock, was snatching a hasty lunch at the station counter, got it from Dutchy Damrosch, the proprietor. It spoiled the big-hearted little man's lunch. He put down his coffee cup, wiped the drops from the ends of his scraggly moustache with the back of his hand, got down from the high stool, stamped out to the platform, and stamped upstairs to the super's office.

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Carleton was tipped back in his swivel chair behind his desk, as Regan entered. Calhoun was over beside the window. There was nobody else in the room.

Carleton, with a glance at the master mechanic's face, spoke at once:

"I guess you've heard it, Tommy. It appears to be all over town. We were just discussing it."

"I don't believe a damned word of it!" spluttered Regan; and then, a little breathless from his climb upstairs, he puffed fiercely at Calhoun: "I know a man when I see one. McClung ain't that kind of a man. You keep your hands off my engine crews, Calhoun, or we'll meet head-on!"

Calhoun colored a little, but there wasn't a hint of animosity in his tones as he spoke.

"You're jumping pretty hard, aren't you, Regan?"

"Mabbe," snapped Regan, unappeased. "Mabbe, but——"

"Wait, Tommy," Carleton broke in quietly. "Unfortunately, it's true."

Calhoun came away from the window toward Regan.

"Im sorry for this," he said earnestly. "It's not a very pleasant beginning for me out here, is it? But unfortunately, as Carleton says, it's true."

There was something straightforward about the new trainmaster, sincerity in his voice, an honest trouble in his face, that Regan, every inch of him a man himself, got and understood for all his ire. Calhoun, too, was the kind the men swore by, square as a die, not the man to find his pleasure in cutting the ground out from under another's feet.

Regan reached into his back pocket for his black-strap, bit deeply, and fussed somewhat as he returned the plug to its abiding place on his hip.

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"Calhoun," he said, "I take back what I said to you. But this means something to me. Maybe you're mistaken. Maybe you've got the wrong man. What's the story?"

Calhoun shook his head

"There isn't any mistake," he said. "I've known McClung for two years back on my old division on the Penn—got to know him pretty well for that matter, and liked him. If I hadn't—liked him, I mean—this probably would never have happened. He threw me cold. He began as a wiper there, and had just got his engine and started in firing when the slack season this spring, beginning with that panic in Wall Street, set in. In about a month we had cancelled every freight we could on the train-sheets, and had pared our passenger schedules down to a minimum. Times got pretty hard; but it hit the engine crews harder than it did my men, for I had been short-handed before the trouble came." Calhoun paused, and nodded toward the super. "I've gone over all this with Mr. Carleton already—I'm repeating it because I daresay you're wondering what a fireman could have to do with lifting fares."

"Yes, go on, Calhoun," said Carleton. "Give Regan the whole of it."

"Well," continued Calhoun, "you can see pretty well how it worked out yourself, Regan. The junior engineers went back to firing, a lot of the firemen, senior to McClung went back to wiping, and some of the younger firemen, McClung amongst them, together with the wipers, were laid off, and had to fit in wherever they could find anything to do. I offered McClung a temporary job as brakeman with one of our conductors by the name of Kalbers on a passenger run, and McClung was glad enough to take it till times got

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better and he could get back into a cab again. Of course, I stretched a point to do it."

Calhoun stopped again abruptly—and then swept out his hand impulsively, as though the whole thing were intensely distasteful to him and he wanted to get it over with as quickly as possible.

"There's no use in making a long story of it," he said brusquely. "In a way, I blame Kalbers. It seems that when the train was heavy Kalbers used to get McClung to help him work it—collecting tickets and fares, you know. One of our spotters was on the train one night—not that I like the breed, mind you—but he was there. He overheard two drummers talking in the smoking car—they had barely caught the train, no time to buy tickets, and they mentioned with a grin the amount of the cash fare they had paid between two points—about one-half what it should have been. It was a 'knock-down', of course. Nothing showed, naturally, in Kalber's returns at the end of the run. It looked like Kalbers right off the bat, of course, and Kalbers went on the carpet for it—and then McClung confessed. It was he who had collected the fares—and pocketed them. I discharged McClung. That's the whole story."

Regan was pulling at his moustache—hard. His eyes that had been on the trainmaster, shifted to the superintendent. It was bad business—but Regan's creed was a man's creed, and its foundation was in the great big heart of him.

"That may be his record back there," said Regan slowly, and he kept his eyes in a sort of tentative way on Carleton; "but out here it's white, clean white—h'm?"

Calhoun had walked back to the window. Carleton sucked at his brier and said nothing.

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A moment the silence held—while the red crept into the little master mechanic's cheeks. And then Regan stormed.

"Out—eh? That means he's out. Well then, it's a damned shame—and it ain't like you, Carleton!" His fat little fist clenched and came down on the super's desk—and unconsciously he said what Barty McClung himself had said. "I've heard it said often enough that a man never gets a chance to 'come back' if he ever jumps the rails—once. Looks like it's true here—what? When a man's down, keep him down—that's the idea, eh? My God! Look at him! Look what he did that night at Hurley's Falls. He slipped once—and he's down for ever. He's trying to make good, ain't he?—and we won't let him. Can't you give him a chance, Carleton—what's it cost you to give him a chance!"

Carleton got up from his chair, came around to Regan, and laid his hand quietly on the master mechanic's arm.

"Pull your fire, Tommy," he said in his grave way. "There's no conspiracy against McClung. I like the man. I think as much of him as you do. I'd give him a chance, a hundred of them, as quick as you would—if I could. I never saw anything finer than what he did that night at the wreck. But we can't run the division on sentiment. Calhoun was obliged to discharge McClung for stealing a few months ago. Calhoun is out here now as trainmaster, and discipline and authority come first over every other consideration. Thanks to that fellow Dawes, everybody knows about this now, and that puts a clincher on it. When you've cooled a bit, Tommy, you'll see there's no other way—McClung is out."

Regan didn't answer at once. Carleton was right—

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Regan knew that now. But logic and Regan's heart weren't always on speaking terms.

"It's tough," said Regan. "Tough—that's what it is."

"Yes," said Carleton; then, after a pause: "Perhaps you'd rather not mix up in it, Tommy, though he's one of your men—I'll send for McClung and say what has to be said."

Regan shook his head.

"If he's out—he's out. That's the main point," he said gruffly. "I'll do the talking to McClung myself."

But Regan didn't do much talking to McClung. What was in the little master mechanic's mind was to save the fireman what bitterness he could, and let the other down as easy as he could; and, as he left the super's office and went down the stairs, his face was puckered and there was hurt in his eyes. But Regan might have saved himself this travail of mind hunting for soft words with which to send McClung away, for Regan, after all, did not discharge McClung—McClung, in a way, discharged himself. Regan found the fireman waiting for him at his office door at the shops.

"Regan," said Barty McClung, before the master mechanic could speak, "you've heard what's—what's going around?"

It came quick, a little unexpectedly, and Regan inadvertently swallowed some black-strap juice—and coughed.

McClung's face was set.

"Well, I came to tell you that it's true," he said monotonously. "Every word of it. I stole the money. Calhoun's not to blame for this, he's as straight as they make them. But I can't stay here now on the same division with a trainmaster who fired me for

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theft on another one. I'm going away now—this afternoon—before I'm told to go."

It wasn't in Regan to tell the other that officially he was already out. Regan didn't say anything. Regan kept pulling at his moustache.

McClung hesitated a moment, shifted a little uncertainly from one foot to the other, looked at Regan sort of wistfully like, as though he hoped to hear Regan say something he wanted to hear—and then, without a word, he turned to go.

Regan cleared his throat then, and called him back.

"If it weren't for Calhoun being here," said Regan fiercely, "I'd——"

"Yes; I know," said Barty—and he smiled a little.

"And I don't give one blamed hoot," announced the impulsive little master mechanic, "about what you've done! You were making good here, Barty. And according to my lights there was a clean sheet coming to you after that night at the wreck. That's the way I feel, and I want you to know it. Where are you going from here?"

"I don't know," said Barty McClung.

"H'm!" said Regan down deep—and repeated it. There was something else he wanted to say, but the something else wouldn't come. And then still tugging with one hand at his moustache, he shoved out the other to Barty McClung.

And Barty McClung took it.

"You're a square man, Regan," he said a little huskily—and walked away.

From the shops, Barty headed toward the round-house—there were a few belongings in his box in the cab of the 1609. And he walked with his eyes straight before him across the yards, across the turntable, and

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in through the end doors to where the 1609 stood on her pit next to the wall.

That part of the roundhouse was apparently deserted; at least, Barty saw no one, and he could hear nothing for the roar of steam from an engine on the next pit, blowing from a full head and ready to go out.

Barty climbed into the cab of the 1609, walked over to his seat, and lifted up the cover.

"I wonder," said Barty McClung wistfully to himself, "who'll be going out with old Steve to-night?"

He bent down, rummaging in his box for his things—and then suddenly he stood erect, listening. Above the racket from the overburdened safety on the next pit, he thought he heard his engineer's voice raised in an angry growl. And as he listened now, it came again—then an oath in a half yell from another voice, and the scuffle of feet.

Barty McClung shoved his head out of the cab window. There wasn't much room between the 1609 on the end pit and the wall of the roundhouse, perhaps six feet, making a sort of alleyway to the rear, where, beyond the tender, the fitters had their benches—and as he looked Barty's jaws clamped.

Close to the bench two figures locked and swayed—Steve Patch and Johnnie Dawes. They crashed against the end of the tender, recovered themselves, and then Johnnie Dawes seemed to fling the engineer from him and follow with a swing to Patch's face.

With a jump, Barty was away from the window, through the gangway and to the ground. There wasn't any doubt what the fight was about—and there wasn't any doubt either in Barty's mind that a man two days off a month's sick bed was no better than a child in the hands of the big, sneaking, raw-boned wiper.

It wasn't far—just a little more than the length of

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the 1609's tender—but, as Barty ran, Dawes swung again, and the old engineer reeled back; then rushed gamely once more.

But now Dawes had seen Barty coming—and he leaped back to the bench behind him. Dawes was yellow, no one ever questioned that, but he might not have done what he did if it hadn't been for the noon hour with his foot on the rail in the Blazing Star Saloon; that, and perhaps a sudden drunken terror that he had to reckon with the two men at once who least of any he knew were likely to show him mercy. His fingers clutched a heavy, long-handled goose-neck wrench—and it was in mid-air above his head as Barty sprang in between the two men.

It was over in an instant. Before Barty could stop his headlong rush, or guard, before he well knew what the wiper was about, he went down like a log with the goose-neck full on his forehead, sprawled to the floor, twitched, and lay unconscious, his skull opened for inches to the bone.

For just a moment neither Dawes nor the engineer moved. Then the wrench clattered from Dawes' hand to the floor, and, white with terror, Dawes ran for the roundhouse door. It was Johnnie Dawes who left the Hill Division for good that day—not Barty McClung.

What? No; Barty McClung's there yet. They carried him up to Steve's, and he had a pretty tight squeak of it for a good many weeks on end; but long before he was even able to recognize anybody or was through talking queer nothings in his delirium, Calhoun got the letter that Regan, the big heart of him happy as a schoolboy's, tacked up over the train register.

Engine crews, train crews and the Hill Division generally had business there, and the men as they signed

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"on" and "off" their runs read it. Hard-fisted, hard-tongued, grimy, some of them, rough and ready all of them, those railroaders of the Rockies, men themselves they loved a man above all other things on earth. They read the letter and they yelled their delight, and they shook hands with each other out of the pure exuberance of their hearts.

It wasn't much of a letter—nothing to blow about so far as English and rhetoric went. It was from Kalbers to Calhoun, Kalbers' old trainmaster; and it wasn't dated from anywhere. It ran like this:

"I've pulled off the old division. The wife's dead now. You remember she was bad all last winter. It would have killed her if she'd known. McClung knew that. Don't think too hard of me. I wouldn't have let him stand for it if it hadn't been that it would have killed the wife if she'd known. It doesn't matter now—she's dead. But she never knew I was a thief. I took the money. McClung's gone somewhere, I don't know where, but if you ever see him, tell him the wife died without ever knowing about it. But that ain't what I'm writing this for—it's to ask you to put McClung right with the boys on the old division.

"Yours truly,
"T. Kalbers."

The Signal Man

BY CHARLES DICKENS

THE SIGNAL MAN

Charles Dickens has probably been read more widely than any English writer since Shakespeare. His keen and perceptive observations on human beings are reflected in the excellent characterisations in his more popular works, such as Pickwick Papers, Oliver Twist, a Tale of Two Cities, and others. Having traveled to some extent, including a trip to the United States, he must inevitably have been impressed by the railroad, as have so many other writers. When he wrote "The Signal-Man" for All the Year Round in 1866, railroading was scarcely out of the museum-piece era. Even then, however, it had a grimerie, dramatic quality which has persisted to this day. There is no lonelier, more plaintive sound in the world than a railroad whistle at night. It is understandable, then, that Charles Dickens should have reverted to the ghostly techniques used so effectively in his "Christmas Carol", to tell this shuddery tale of a railroad signal man tortured by precognition.

"HALLOA! BELOW THERE!"

When he heard a voice thus calling to him, he was standing at the door of his box, with a flag in his hand, furled round its short pole. One would have thought, considering the nature of the ground, that he could not have doubted from what quarter the voice came; but, instead of looking up to where I stood on the top of the steep cutting nearly over his head, he turned himself about and looked down the Line. There was something remarkable in his manner of doing so, though I could not have said, for my life, what. But, I know it was remarkable enough to attract my notice,

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even though his figure was foreshortened and shadowed, down in the deep trench, and mine was high above him, so steeped in the glow of an angry sunset that I had shaded my eyes with my hand before I saw him at all.

“Halloa! Below!”

From looking down the Line, he turned himself about again, and, raising his eyes, saw my figure high above him.

“Is there any path by which I can come down and speak to you?”

He looked up at me without replying, and I looked down at him without pressing him too soon with a repetition of my idle question. Just then, there came a vague vibration in the earth and air, quickly changing into a violent pulsation, and an oncoming rush that caused me to start back, as though it had force to draw me down. When such vapour as rose to my height from this rapid train, had passed me and was skimming away over the landscape, I looked down again, and saw him re-furling the flag he had shown while the train went by.

I repeated my inquiry. After a pause, during which he seemed to regard me with fixed attention, he motioned with his rolled-up flag towards a point on my level, some two or three hundred yards distant. I called down to him, “All right!” and made for that point. There, by dint of looking closely about me, I found a rough zig-zag descending path notched out: which I followed.

The cutting was extremely deep, and unusually precipitate. It was made through a clammy stone that became oozier and wetter as I went down. For these reasons, I found the way long enough to give me time to

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recall a singular air of reluctance or compulsion with which he had pointed out the path.

When I came down low enough upon the zig-zag descent, to see him again, I saw that he was standing between the rails on the way by which the train had lately passed, in an attitude as if he were waiting for me to appear. He had his left hand at his chin, and that left elbow rested on his right hand crossed over his breast. His attitude was one of such expectation and watchfulness, that I stopped a moment, wondering at it.

I resumed my downward way, and, stepping out upon the level of the railroad and drawing nearer to him, saw that he was a dark sallow man, with a dark beard and rather heavy eyebrows. His post was in as solitary and dismal a place as ever I saw. On either side, a dripping-wet wall of jagged stone, excluding all view but a strip of sky; the perspective one way, only a crooked prolongation of this great dungeon; the shorter perspective in the other direction, terminating in a gloomy red light, and the gloomier entrance to a black tunnel, in whose massive architecture there was a barbarous, depressing, and forbidding air. So little sunlight ever found its way to this spot, that it had an earthy deadly smell; and so much cold wind rushed through it, that it struck chill to me, as if I had left the natural world.

Before he stirred, I was near enough to him to have touched him. Not even then removing his eyes from mine, he stepped back one step, and lifted his hand.

This was a lonesome post to occupy (I said), and it had riveted my attention when I looked down from up yonder. A visitor was a rarity, I should suppose; not an unwelcome rarity, I hoped? In me, he merely saw a man who had been shut up within narrow limits all

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his life, and who, being at last set free, had a newly-awakened interest in these great works. To such purpose I spoke to him; but I am far from sure of the terms I used, for, besides that I am not happy in opening any conversation, there was something in the man that daunted me.

He directed a most curious look towards the red light near the tunnel's mouth, and looked all about it, as if something were missing from it, and then looked at me.

That light was part of his charge? Was it not?

He answered in a low voice: "Don't you know it is?"

The monstrous thought came into my mind as I perused the fixed eyes and the saturnine face, that this was a spirit, not a man. I have speculated since, whether there may have been infection in his mind.

In my turn, I stepped back. But in making the action, I detected in his eyes some latent fear of me. This put the monstrous thought to flight.

"You look at me," I said, forcing a smile, "as if you had a dread of me."

"I was doubtful," he returned, "whether I had seen you before."

"Where?"

He pointed to the red light he had looked at.

"There?" I said.

Intently watchful of me, he replied (but without sound), Yes.

"My good fellow, what should I do there? However, be that as it may, I never was there, you may swear."

"I think I may," he rejoined. "Yes. I am sure I may."

His manner cleared, like my own. He replied to my remarks with readiness, and in well-chosen words.

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Had he much to do there? Yes; that was to say, he had enough responsibility to bear: but exactness and watchfulness were what was required of him, and of actual work—manual labour he had next to none. To change that signal, to trim those lights, and to turn this iron handle now and then, was all he had to do under that head. Regarding those many long and lonely hours of which I seemed to make so much, he could only say that the routine of his life had shaped itself into that form, and he had grown used to it. He had taught himself a language down here—if only to know it by sight, and to have formed his own crude ideas of its pronounciation, could be called learning it. He had also worked at fractions and decimals, and tried a little algebra; but he was, and had been as a boy, a poor hand at figures. Was it necessary for him when on duty, always to remain in that channel of damp air, and could he never rise into the sunshine from between those high stone walls? Why, that depended upon times and circumstances. Under some conditions there would be less upon the Line than under others, and the same held good as to certain hours of the day and night. In bright weather, he did choose occasions for getting a little above these lower shadows: but, being at all times liable to be called by his electric bell, and at such times listening for it with redoubled anxiety, the relief was less than I would suppose.

He took me into his box, where there was a fire, a desk for an official book in which he had to make certain entries, a telegraphic instrument with its dial face and needles, and the little bell of which he had spoken. On my trusting that he would excuse the remark that he had been well-educated, and (I hoped I might say without offence), perhaps educated above that station, he observed that instances of slight in-

congruity in such-wise would rarely be found wanting among large bodies of men; that he had heard it was so in workhouses, in the police force, even in that last desperate resource, the army; and that he knew it was so, more or less, in any great railway staff. He had been, when young (if I could believe it, sitting in that hut; he scarcely could), a student of natural philosophy, and had attended lectures; but he had run wild, misused his opportunities, gone down, and never risen again. He had no complaint to offer about that. He had made his bed, and he lay upon it. It was far too late to make another.

All that I have here condensed, he said in a quiet manner, with his grave dark regards divided between me and the fire. He threw in the word "Sir" from time to time, and especially when he referred to his youth: as though to request me to understand that he claimed to be nothing but what I found him. He was several times interrupted by the little bell, and had to read off messages, and send replies. Once, he had to stand without the door, and display a flag as a train passed, and make some verbal communication to the driver. In the discharge of his duties I observed him to be remarkably exact and vigilant, breaking off his discourse at a syllable, and remaining silent until what he had to do was done.

In a word, I should have set this man down as one of the safest of men to be employed in that capacity, but for the circumstance that while he was speaking to me he twice broke off with a fallen colour, turned his face towards the little bell when it did not ring, opened the door of the hut (which was kept shut to exclude the unhealthy damp), and looked out towards the red light near the mouth of the tunnel. On both of those occasions, he came back to the fire with the in-

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explicable air upon him which I had remarked, without being able to define, when we were so far asunder.

Said I when I rose to leave him: "You almost make me think that I have met with a contented man."

(I am afraid I must acknowledge that I said it to lead him on.)

"I believe I used to be so," he rejoined, in the low voice in which he had first spoken; "but I am troubled, sir, I am troubled."

He would have recalled the words if he could. He had said them, however, and I took them up quickly.

"With what? What is your trouble?"

"It is very difficult to impart, sir. It is very, very difficult to speak of. If ever you make me another visit, I will try to tell you."

"But I expressly intend to make you another visit. Say, when shall it be?"

"I go off early in the morning, and I shall be on again at ten to-morrow night, sir."

"I will come at eleven."

He thanked me, and went out at the door with me. "I'll show my white light, sir," he said, in his peculiar low voice, "till you have found the way up. When you have found it, don't call out! And when you are at the top, don't call out!"

His manner seemed to make the place strike colder to me, but I said no more than "Very well."

"And when you come down to-morrow night, don't call out! Let me ask you a parting question. What made you cry 'Halloa! Below there!' to-night?"

"Heaven knows," said I. "I cried something to that effect——"

"Not to that effect, sir. Those were the very words. I know them well."

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"Admit those were the very words. I said them, no doubt, because I saw you below."

"For no other reason?"

"What other reason could I possibly have!"

"You had no feeling that they were conveyed to you in any supernatural way?"

"No."

He wished me good night, and held up his light. I walked by the side of the down Line of rails (with a very disagreeable sensation of a train coming behind me), until I found the path. It was easier to mount than to descend, and I got back to my inn without any adventure.

Punctual to my appointment, I placed my foot on the first notch of the zig-zag next night, as the distant clocks were striking eleven. He was waiting for me at the bottom, with his white light on. "I have not called out," I said, when we came close together; "may I speak now?" "By all means, sir." "Good night then, and here's my hand." "Good night, sir, and here's mine." With that, we walked side by side to his box, entered it, closed the door, and sat down by the fire.

"I have made up my mind, sir," he began, bending forward as soon as we were seated, and speaking in a tone but a little above a whisper, "that you shall not have to ask me twice what troubles me. I took you for someone else yesterday evening. That troubles me."

"That mistake?"

"No. That someone else."

"Who is it?"

"I don't know."

"Like me?"

"I don't know. I never saw the face. The left arm

is across the face, and the right arm is waved. Violently waved. This way."

I followed his action with my eyes, and it was the action of an arm gesticulating with the utmost passion and vehemence: "For God's sake clear the way!"

"One moonlight night," said the man, "I was sitting here, when I heard a voice cry 'Halloa! Below there!' I started up, looked from that door, and saw this Some one else standing by the red light near the tunnel, waving as I just now showed you. The voice seemed hoarse with shouting, and it cried, 'Look out! Look out!' And then again 'Halloa! Below there! Look out!' I caught up my lamp, turned it on red, and ran towards the figure, calling, 'What's wrong? What has happened? Where?' It stood just outside the blackness of the tunnel. I advanced so close upon it that I wondered at its keeping the sleeve across its eyes. I ran right up at it, and had my hand stretched out to pull the sleeve away, when it was gone."

"Into the tunnel," said I.

"No. I ran on into the tunnel, five hundred yards. I stopped and held my lamp above my head, and saw the figures of the measured distance, and saw the wet stains stealing down the walls and trickling through the arch. I ran out again, faster than I had run in (for I had a mortal abhorrence of the place upon me), and I looked all around the red light with my own red light, and I went up the iron ladder to the gallery atop of it, and I came down again, and ran back here. I telegraphed both ways, 'An alarm has been given. Is anything wrong?' The answer came back, both ways: 'All well.'"

Resisting the slow touch of a frozen finger tracing out my spine, I showed him how this figure must be a deception of his sense of sight, and how figures, or-

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iginating in disease of the delicate nerves that minister to the functions of the eye, were known to have often troubled patients, some of whom had become conscious of the nature of their affliction, and had even proved it by experiments upon themselves. "As to an imaginary cry," said I, "do but listen for a moment to the wind in this unnatural valley while we speak so low, and to the wild harp it makes of the telegraph wires!"

That was all very well, he returned, after we had sat listening for a while, and he ought to know something of the wind and the wires, he who so often passed long winter nights there, alone and watching. But he would beg to remark that he had not finished.

I asked his pardon, and he slowly added these words, touching my arm:

"Within six hours after the Appearance, the memorable accident on this Line happened, and within ten hours the dead and wounded were brought along through the tunnel over the spot where the figure had stood."

A disagreeable shudder crept over me, but I did my best against it. It was not to be denied, I rejoined, that this was a remarkable coincidence, calculated deeply to impress his mind. But it was unquestionable that remarkable coincidences did continually occur, and they must be taken into account in dealing with such a subject. Though to be sure I must admit, I added (for I thought I saw that he was going to bring the objection to bear upon me), men of common sense did not allow much for coincidences in making the ordinary calculations of life.

He again begged to remark that he had not finished.

I again begged his pardon for being betrayed into interruptions.

"This," he said, again laying his hand upon my arm, and glancing over his shoulder with hollow eyes, "was just a year ago. Six or seven months passed, and I had recovered from the surprise and shock, when one morning, as the day was breaking, I, standing at that door, looked towards the red light, and saw the spectre again." He stopped, with a fixed look at me.

"Did it cry out?"

"No. It was silent."

"Did it wave its arm?"

"No. It leaned against the shaft of the light, with both hands before the face. Like this."

Once more, I followed his action with my eyes. It was an action of mourning. I have seen such an attitude in stone figures on tombs.

"Did you go up to it?"

"I came in and sat down, partly to collect my thoughts, partly because it had turned me faint. When I went to the door again, daylight was above me, and the ghost was gone."

"But nothing followed? Nothing came of this?"

He touched me on the arm with his forefinger twice or thrice, giving a ghastly nod each time:

"That very day, as a train came out of the tunnel, I noticed, at a carriage window on my side, what looked like a confusion of hands and heads, and something waved. I saw it, just in time to signal the driver, Stop! He shut off, and put his brake on, but the train drifted past here a hundred and fifty yards or more. I ran after it, and, as I went along, heard terrible screams and cries. A beautiful young lady had died instant-

neously in one of the compartments, and was brought in here, and laid down on this floor between us."

Involuntarily, I pushed my chair back, as I looked from the boards at which he pointed, to himself.

"True, sir. True. Precisely as it happened, so I tell it you."

I could think of nothing to say, to any purpose, and my mouth was very dry. The wind and the wires took up the story with a long lamenting wail.

He resumed. "Now, sir, mark this, and judge how my mind is troubled. The spectre came back, a week ago. Ever since, it has been there, now and again, by fits and starts."

"At the light?"

"At the Danger-light."

"What does it seem to do?"

He repeated, if possible with increased passion and vehemence, that former gesticulation of "For God's sake clear the way!"

Then, he went on. "I have no peace or rest for it. It calls to me, for many minutes together, in an agonized manner, 'Below there! Look out! Look out!' It stands waving at me. It rings my little bell—"

I caught at that. "Did it ring your bell yesterday evening when I was here, and you went to the door?"

"Twice."

"Why, see," said I, "how your imagination misleads you. My eyes were on the bell, and my ears were open to the bell, and if I am a living man, it did not ring at those times. No, nor at any other time, except when it was rung in the natural course of physical things by the station communicating with you."

He shook his head. "I have never made a mistake as to that, yet, sir. I have never confused the spectre's ring with the man's. The ghost's ring is a strange vi-

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bration in the bell that it derives from nothing else, and I have not asserted that the bell stirs to the eye. I don't wonder that you failed to hear it. But *I* heard it."

"And did the spectre seem to be there, when you looked out?"

"It was there."

"Both times?"

He repeated firmly: "Both times."

"Will you come to the door with me, and look for it now?"

He bit his under-lip as though he were somewhat unwilling, but arose. I opened the door, and stood on the step, while he stood in the doorway. There, was the Danger-light. There, was the dismal mouth of the tunnel. There, were the high wet stone walls of the cutting. There, were the stars above them.

"Do you see it?" I asked him, taking particular note of his face. His eyes were prominent and strained; but not very much more so, perhaps, than my own had been when I had directed them earnestly towards the same spot.

"No," he answered. "It is not there."

"Agreed," said I.

We went in again, shut the door, and resumed our seats. I was thinking how best to improve this advantage, if it might be called one, when he took up the conversation in such a matter of course way, so assuming that there could be no serious question of fact between us, that I felt myself placed in the weakest of positions.

"By this time you will fully understand, sir," he said, "that what troubles me so dreadfully, is the question, What does the spectre mean?"

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I was not sure, I told him, that I did fully understand.

"What is its warning against?" he said, ruminating, with his eyes on the fire, and only by times turning them on me. "What is the danger? Where is the danger? There is danger overhanging, somewhere on the Line. Some dreadful calamity will happen. It is not to be doubted this third time, after what has gone before. But surely this is a cruel haunting of *me*. What can *I* do?"

He pulled out his handkerchief, and wiped the drops from his heated forehead.

"If I telegraph Danger, on either side of me, or on both, I can give no reason for it," he went on, wiping the palms of his hands. "I should get into trouble, and do no good. They would think I was mad. This is the way it would work:—Message: 'Danger! Take care!' Answer: 'What Danger? Where?' Message: 'Don't know. But for God's sake take care!' They would displace me. What else could they do?"

His pain of mind was most pitiable to see. It was the mental torture of a conscientious man, oppressed beyond endurance by an unintelligible responsibility involving life.

"When it first stood under the Danger-light," he went on, putting his dark hair back from his head, and drawing his hands outward across and across his temples in an extremity of feverish distress, "why not tell me where that accident was to happen— if it must happen? Why not tell me how it could be averted—if it could have been averted? When on its second coming it hid its face, why not tell me instead: 'She is going to die. Let them keep her at home'? If it came, on those two occasions, only to show me that its warnings were true, and so to prepare me for the

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third, why not warn me plainly now? And I, Lord help me! A mere poor signalman on this solitary station! Why not go to somebody with credit to be believed, and power to act!"

When I saw him in this state, I saw that for the poor man's sake, as well as for the public safety, what I had to do for the time was, to compose his mind. Therefore, setting aside all question of reality or unreality between us, I represented to him that whoever thoroughly discharged his duty, must do well, and that at least it was his comfort that he understood his duty, though he did not understand these confronting Appearances. In this effort I succeeded far better than in the attempt to reason him out of his conviction. He became calm; the occupations incidental to his post as the night advanced, began to make larger demands on his attention; and I left him at two in the morning. I had offered to stay through the night, but he would not hear of it.

That I more than once looked back at the red light as I ascended the pathway, that I did not like the red light, and that I should have slept poorly if my bed had been under it, I see no reason to conceal. Nor, did I like the two sequences of the accident and the dead girl. I see no reason to conceal that, either.

But, what ran most in my thoughts was the consideration how ought I to act, having become the recipient of this disclosure? I had proved the man to be intelligent, vigilant, painstaking, and exact; but how long might he remain so, in his state of mind? Though in a subordinate position, still he held a most important trust, and would I (for instance) like to stake my own life on the chances of his continuing it with precision?

Unable to overcome a feeling that there would be

something treacherous in my communicating what he told me, to his superiors in the Company, without first being plain with himself and proposing a middle course to him, I ultimately resolved to offer to accompany him (otherwise keeping his secret for the present) to the wisest medical practitioner we could hear of in those parts, and to take his opinion. A change in his time of duty would come round next night, he had apprised me, and he would be off an hour or two after sunrise, and on again soon after sunset. I had appointed to return accordingly.

Next evening was a lovely evening, and I walked out early to enjoy it. The sun was not yet quite down when I traversed the field-path near the top of the deep cutting. I would extend my walk for an hour, I said to myself, half an hour on and half an hour back, and it would be the time to go to my signal-man's box.

Before pursuing my stroll, I stepped to the brink, and mechanically looked down, from the point from which I had first seen him. I cannot describe the thrill that seized upon me, when, close at the mouth of the tunnel, I saw the appearance of a man, with his left sleeve across his eyes, passionately waving his right arm.

The nameless hour that oppressed me, passed in a moment, for in a moment I saw this appearance of a man was a man indeed, and that there was a little group of other men standing at a shorter distance, to whom he seemed to be rehearsing the gesture he made. The Danger-light was not yet lighted. Against its shaft, a little low hut, entirely new to me, had been made of some wooden supports and tarpaulin. It looked no bigger than a bed.

With an irresistible sense that something was wrong—with a flashing self-reproachful fear that fatal

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mischievous had come of my leaving the man there, and causing no one to be sent to overlook or correct what he did—I descended the notched path with all the speed I could make.

“What is the matter?” I asked the man.

“Signal-man killed this morning, sir.”

“Not the man belonging to that box?”

“Yes, sir”

“Not the man I know?”

“You will recognise him, sir, if you knew him,” said the man who spoke for the others, solemnly uncovering his own head and raising an end of the tarpaulin, “for his face is quite composed.”

“O! how did this happen, how did this happen?” I asked, turning from one to another as the hut closed in again.

“He was cut down by an engine, sir. No man in England knew his work better. But somehow he was not clear of the outer rail. It was just at broad day. He had struck the light, and had the lamp in his hand. As the engine came out of the tunnel, his back was towards her, and she cut him down. That man drove her, and was showing how it happened. Show the gentleman, Tom.”

The man, who wore a rough dark dress, stepped back to his former place at the mouth of the tunnel!

“Coming round the curve in the tunnel, sir,” he said, “I saw him at the end, like as if I saw him down a perspective-glass. There was no time to check speed, and I knew him to be very careful. As he didn’t seem to take heed of the whistle, I shut it off when we were running down upon him, and called to him as loud as I could call.”

“What did you say?”

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"I said, 'Below there! Look out! Look out! For God's sake clear the way!'"

I started.

"Ah! it was a dreadful time, sir. I never left off calling to him. I put this arm before my eyes, not to see, and I waved this arm to the last; but it was no use."

Without prolonging the narrative to dwell on any one of its curious circumstances more than on any other, I may, in closing it, point out the coincidence that the warning of the Engine-Driver included, not only the words which the unfortunate Signal-man had repeated to me as haunting him, but also the words which I myself—not he—had attached, and that only in my own mind, to the gesticulation he had imitated.

Trackside Grave

BY JACK McLARN

TRACKSIDE GRAVE

Every category of fiction produces men outstanding in that particular field. Each decade sees new names rise to prominence. In the past few years, the name of Jack McLarn has emerged as one of the two or three outstanding writers in the field of railroad fiction. Because he is currently popular and in a sense a modern, we present in this volume two of his stories which should serve as a good indication of what is currently being done in the railroad story field. Like Somerville, Jack Clinton McLarn is the son of a railroad man. His father has been on the Southern's payroll since 1906 and today, at 71 is still dispatching trains. "When I was 12," says Jack, "Dad taught me to telegraph, and I've never worked a day except on the Southern since." Jack McLarn has worked on the Southern Railway since 1921; at present, he is chief clerk in the motive power department, a post he has filled since 1943. Again like Somerville, McLarn has continued to work on the railroad while carrying on writing as an avocation. Stylistically his writing is above average and his stories have appeared in such magazines as The Saturday Evening Post, Railroad Magazine, Argosy, and Adventure.

DOWN ON THE Atlantic Division of the SG&A, exactly 51.2 miles north of Port City, you can see a small plot of grass, outlined with whitewashed stones and a granite slab on which is chiseled the name *Duncan*—an oasis of green in a drab wasteland. There's a tree, too, a lone palmetto, the only tree for miles around, and on the other side of the track you can see a station sign, also Duncan.

But there isn't any station. Nor a single human

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habitation. That splash or color on the right-of-way is a tomb. Not the last resting place of a link-and-pin pioneer nor the tumulus of a man who loved his railroad so much that it was fitting for him to be buried there beside the dusty track. Nothing of the kind.

Maybe you know the legend. They tell it in the washrooms, the switch shanties, and the call offices, every spot where SG&A men gather to chew the fat in between crew assignments. The whole division hated that man, but it gave him the highest accolade a railroad division can bestow—a trackside grave, not to mention a special train to the funeral and a third of a baggage car filled with flowers. Sooner or later, if you should ride the SG&A down through the Southland, you'll hear the story.

Years ago, when oil was struck thereabouts, Port City changed from a rundown little water terminal into a brawling boom town. Overnight, almost, oil refineries sprang up and the harbor facilities grew, the weedy sidings were jacked up from gray mud, and the Atlantic Division suddenly became hot stuff.

Tankers spewed oil and gasoline into long, empty, storage tanks by the millions of gallons. Refineries were running full time. Word came from the big office: Move it—and fast!

The division rocked back on its rundown heels. Ancient steamers of the 800 series, jerked out of retirement and given bailing-wire and chewing-gum overhauls, were the heaviest power the neglected road-bed could take. They doubleheaded in groaning pairs, the crews turned on their rest, the yard crews switched cars in their sleep.

It was a mess—a smelly, sweaty mess! Crude oil, high octane, and even that hair-lifting and loaded-under-pressure-and-prayer LPG—liquefied petroleum

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gas—poured in a deadly torrent out of Port City, across the riprap country to the main line at Branchville, while the safety valve of the Atlantic Division simmered and shimmied.

There was one more thing to do. Get men! "Buck" Quillen, the superintendent, was laid up with stomach ulcers, so the college-trained, bespectacled Johnny Harrison, pulled off an assistant's job somewhere and dropped behind the trainmaster's desk, was doing just that. Guantanamo Smith, the Trainmen's iron-fisted local chairman, was standing watchfully by to see that Johnny didn't foul things up too completely.

By telephone, telegram, and registered letter, the call went out. From filling stations and drugstores, bus lines and farmhouses, the cutoff men came trooping back, protecting the thing you guard with fanatic jealousy—seniority.

It was late afternoon. Guantanamo Smith had gone out for coffee, leaving Johnny alone. Johnny didn't notice right off the runty character standing patiently before his desk.

At length he looked up and blinked. "Uh?" he said sleepily. "Sorry. Name?"

The newcomer eyed him as if trying to remember something. He wasn't like the motley crew that had cluttered up the super's office all day. His suit had once cost plenty. His hands were soft. A blue-white diamond flashed fire from one finger. But there was something oddly blank about him, as if the color had been bleached out, leaving vapidness.

"Duncan," he said flatly. "Brandt Duncan. I got a message."

Johnny's pencil probed the list. *Duncan, B., trainman.* He reached for an order pad.

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"Okay," he grunted. "Duncan. Go get a check-up, then mosey back here. Take this to—"

A hoarse sound rumbled from the man's throat. Johnny glanced up. Duncan was staring toward the door, staring at Guantanamo Smith, whose six-foot-four bulk tensed like a coiled rattler. The local chairman toted a tin pail of steaming Java. He set it down on the table and gasped.

"Duncan; By all the gods—*Duncan!* So you crawled back?"

He peeled off his jumper and his face went mottled red.

Duncan edged away. "Hold it! Wait—"

The Brotherhood representative stalked closer, his great fists balled.

"I been promisin' meself," he boomed, "ever since th' day I took what was left of Mike Patrim off'n th' boilerhead of th' 802, I been promisin' meself this, if you ever hit th' grit here again. I been waitin'—"

"Keep off me, Guantanamo!" the job applicant warned, his own shoulders hunching. "I came clean. You spoke for me, remember. You and the rest. I'm a good brakeman. I got a white card—"

The griever's voice shook like his hands. "Yeah, a white card, you lousy, stinkin', drunken bum! May the saints forgive me! I did go to bat for you, Duncan, when every man on this pike knew damn well it was your short flaggin' that killed Mike and his fireboy. But this ain't no 'vestigation. This is between you and me."

He lunged, and the short brakeman ducked under his muscular arm. The huge griever crashed into the wall. Raging, he whirled as Duncan faced him with the ferocity of a cornered swamp-rat. At that moment Johnny Harrison took a hand.

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"Smith!" he barked, in a trainmaster's voice.

Guantanamo halted in midair and turned around. "Who, me? Say, cap, you'd better stay outa this. We got a score to settle."

Fury distorted the griever's face.

The bespectacled man at the desk spoke calmly. "I've read the file on Duncan. He did come clear. The book says he can work here, and so we called him back."

Duncan's expression showed disbelief as he edged away from the griever. But Smith was enough of a Brotherhood man to know he was outvoted. A big fellow, inside and out, he took the decision without a whimper. Picking up his jumper, he got into it and headed for the door.

"Okay, cap," he grunted, his hand on the knob. "You're the brass collar. But you're gonna be sorry, I think. And you—" He glowered at the runt. "Keep outa my hair! Any time you're off the right-o'-way, things'll be different."

After the door had banged behind him, Duncan inquired: "All right, mister, say it! Do I hit the road?"

Johnny shook his head. "Not for my money."

Duncan studied him thoughtfully. The trainmaster tried to read the pale blue eyes, was baffled, and gave it up.

"I'm staying," the brakeman said flatly. "And—thanks. I'll remember." A dry chuckle seemed to come from nowhere. "You needn't bother checking my clearance. I don't think it'll be necessary."

Duncan passed his physical, which wasn't much. Johnny put him through a brushup rules check and marked him on the board. It didn't take Duncan long to get back in business. It didn't take Guantanamo Smith long, either. Buck Quillan crawled out of bed,

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gulped a few pills, and had Johnny on the rug before good daylight.

"This guy Duncan," he said without preamble. "Why?"

Johnny shot it back at him. "You cleared his record yourself. Name's still on the seniority roster. Book says to call him back. Doc says he's in one piece. He knows the Rule Book from cover to cover. You're the boss. Name it."

Quillan looked Johnny up and down. "So you talk back, eh?" he said, half admiringly. "But Duncan's a bad egg, Johnny. Wish I'd been here—"

Johnny stared back. "Okay," he said. "To please Guantanamo Smith, where do I nail the hide?"

The superintendent groaned. "Ulcers, and now a smart boy for trainmaster." Then the chips went down with a clatter. "I want him off this division! That's an order. Now, I'm going back home."

It was a tough assignment. But Johnny had help. With Guantanamo Smith in the lead, the division lined up solidly against Duncan. When the undersized brakeman walked into a washroom he had plenty of space on either side. At Ma Gannon's he ate alone—chilly, doughnuts and cold coffee, for Ma was a rail-roader's widow. Everywhere Brandt Duncan went he was isolated, his blue eyes motionless in his head, and he always seemed to be watching for something.

But Duncan knew his business; the Atlantic Division gave him credit for that. He was catlike on his feet, luckily for him. More than one hogger tried to leave him by heading out a siding too fast. Maybe it was accidental, but sometimes cars were "dropped in" on him, soundless as only free-running loads can be.

A sort of evil cloud hung over Duncan everywhere. For the division remembered Mike Patrim and his

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fireman, dead in the cab of the 802. And it recalled with sullen shame the fight it had waged to clear Duncan, because—well, because Duncan was then a brother trainman. You went to bat for a brother, right or wrong.

Now Duncan was back, a livid symbol of a mistake. The division didn't want to be reminded of that.

So Duncan went his silent way, alert, watchful, obviously contemptuous of everything on the road. And just as alert, just as watchful, Johnny Harrison plodded along behind, waiting for him to slip. For Johnny resented being on trial, too. It was a long way to the next step, and an order is an order.

Then came the murky night when Brandt Duncan was called as hind brakeman on an extra west. The call office tipped Johnny. The trainmaster slipped early through the dark train-yard and climbed into an empty boxcar. It was drizzling rain, just the night for a shack to stick in the cab when he shouldn't.

Fifty miles out of Port City, Pete Donnelly cut his creaky 800 loose from his train and snorted ahead a few car-lengths to take water. Johnny dropped to the soaked cinders. Duncan should be on the dirt, checking for hot journals. But if the T.M. could catch him dry and warm in the cab, it would be a good excuse to can him.

Halfway back, Johnny saw a light bobbing briskly along the dripping cars. Duncan. On the job.

The trainmaster's ears burned. Suddenly he wanted to get out of sight. Almost angrily he swung up between two wet boxcars. The corrugated ends were slippery. It wasn't the safe thing to do, but it was quick. His clammy slicker dragged at his leg, his shoe-soles were thin and wet. Fear cut into his spine. He half

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turned to drop back to the ground, and just then Pete Donnelly backed the 800 against the train. Hard.

Slack came running back in a series of grating crashes. Johnny made a frantic grab for an end-ladder that wasn't there. His head thudded viciously against the metal car end and all the strength went out of him. Limp, he slid down the end of the car, bunched crazily over the metal of the meshed couplers, and crunched to the ground, half-conscious and terrified.

He tried to rouse himself. His fingers dug into the wet cinders as he struggled to drag his unresponsive body clear of the rail.

The hoarse whistle of Number 800 blasted the night, calling in the flag. Down on the rain-swept track, the wave of blackness receded from Johnny's brain and flooded back again. Inches away, the low-dragging brake rigging was waiting. When the train moved—

Twice more Pete Donnelly jerked his whistle cord. The hiss of air from releasing brakes sounded like the last preliminary to a messy death for Johnny Harrison. Teeth chattering, the T.M. choked out what could have been a prayer and closed his eyes.

Then something jerked him violently sideward. A flange touched his leg, crunched horribly at his slicker. Something ripped free—and Johnny Harrison rolled down the fill with Brandt Duncan into a briar patch, while the extra moved ponderously past.

Duncan's voice, dry and colorless, sounded in his ear.

"Sort of evens us up, cap," he said. "Just lay there while I sign this rattler down."

Three days later the bespectacled Johnny dragged his bruises and blackberry scratches into Buck Quilan's office. The superintendent scowled at him.

"No wonder I have ulcers," he grunted, "between

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you and Duncan. Now I guess you want him to have a medal."

Johnny stared. "He jerks me out from under a truck, and I ought to get him fired. A guy I outweigh by forty pounds. He knew I was tailing him. What'd you do, boss?"

Quillan sighed. "It's not for us now."

He slid something across the desk—a photograph, front and side. Fingerprints and a long number. The name wasn't the same, but you couldn't miss the likeness.

"Your boy got into bad company when he drifted East," Quillan said regretfully. "He was a finger man for a mob. *He's a killer*, Johnny! Sorry."

The T.M. gulped hard. So that was the quiet, colorless, cold-eyed Duncan!

"It figures," the superintendent stated. "Where would he find a better place to hide? His old name, his home division. He'd be safe here for a while. Then he could wander on. Might even make it to Mexico."

Quillan heaved himself to his feet and winced. "Damn ulcers! Got to go home. And," he grinned at Johnny, "I didn't get around to reading my mail. Tomorrow I will."

Back in his own office, the trainmaster listened as a freight rumbled past. A manifest job—gasoline, oil, LPG. He reached for the telephone. It was a 53: conductor, G. Smith; engineer, P. Donnelly; head brakeman, B. Duncan. Leading characters in a drama that was drawing to a final curtain.

Johnny sighed. Well, this would be Duncan's last trip. When the blue-eyed little brakeman reported back at the end of the run, Les White would be waiting. Les White, the division's special agent. That bull never lost a prisoner—alive.

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At two a.m. the phone beside Johnny's bed jangled him half awake. The night chief dispatcher clipped off his news with practiced tenseness: Number 253, twenty cars spilled, milepost 51.2. Not on fire—yet.

Johnny got dressed, out of the house, and into his Buick in four minutes flat. So Duncan was a killer? Owed a debt to society, eh? But Johnny owed *him* a debt, too. Sooner or later, the trainmaster figured, the law would catch up with Duncan. But not right now.

Shortly after the first pale streaks of a cloudy day-break, Johnny arrived at the pile-up. Reek of gasoline from the ruptured tank cars filled the air. Gasoline was flowing into the ditches, along the ditches, and spreading out to the drab flat country. Pete Donnelly's stub-stacked 800, her rear tender truck derailed, squatted dangerously near disaster. It wasn't even safe to dump the fire.

The derrick nosed down to the spill, its cables wrapped to keep the sparks out. Wouldn't take much to start a blaze. Not very much.

"Morning, cap. We got a picnic."

Duncan had materialized out of a welter of wreckage. Without a word, Johnny fished the Rogues Gallery photo from his pocket and handed it over. The runty brakeman glanced at it with a lack of expression. Then he nodded to the trainmaster.

"My car's at the crossing," Johnny said with a faint smile. "Keys in it. Maybe you won't get far, but—good luck, Duncan!"

Duncan gazed at the sky. Suddenly his old hunted look was gone.

"A guy gets tired of running," he mumbled. "Ain't worth it—"

The scream of a whistle drowned his words. Pete Donnelly was leaning from his cab window, gesturing

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frantically toward the road crossing. Johnny looked, and froze.

A gleaming puddle had formed on the dirt road—gasoline from the broken cars—deep and wide and deadly! And toward it lumbered a red-and-yellow school bus. Every window framed the curious faces of boys and girls.

Johnny's voice cracked in a yell as he stumbled toward the crossing. But the bus reached there first. Once more Pete Donnelly bore down on his whistle cord. And the young bus driver got the idea. He jammed his brakes and killed his engine, halting the vehicle in a reeking death-trap!

The trainmaster quickly splashed through gasoline up to his knees and tore at the bus door. It creaked open. Children's voices babbled excitedly.

"Stay off that starter, kid!" Johnny commanded. "All right, everybody out! Big wreck! Get moving!"

He began yanking sixth-graders from their seats. The youngsters made a game of it, squealing in fun and tumbling over each other.

"Step on it! Hurry it up!"

From a quarter-mile away came the dull *whooom* of igniting gasoline. Flame and smoke mushroomed toward the morning sky. Terror welled up in Johnny's brain.

From the exploding pile, leading directly to the pool, was a ditch filled with the stuff—a fuse to a deadly bomb!

The kids saw it, too, and the fear took hold of them. In an instant they had jammed in the narrow door. Wildly, Johnny tore at the mass.

"Duncan!" he shouted. "Duncan!"

He could fairly see a little ripple of fire skipping along toward him. Toward him and the school bus.

"Duncan! Help me!"

Over the distant howl of leaping flame, he heard a voice, Duncan's voice.

"Donnelly!" he shouted over the roar. "Steam—wide open!"

Out of the corner of his eye, the T. M. saw Brandt Duncan lunge behind the tank of the 800. Then he heard the screaming roar of pent-up steam as Pete Donnelly sent full boiler pressure into the steam-heat line the 800s carried for passenger service. Live, howling steam ripped into the cinders.

That's the story they tell. Of Duncan, on his knees behind the derailed tender, gripping with bare hands the twisting, bucking rubber steam hose which was sending the blue-white vapor squarely into the flooded ditch, a few yards ahead of the racing flame.

Steam blasted the fire back upon itself, held it away. Seconds he bought, seconds for Johnny, seconds for the children in the bus, seconds for the eternal peace of mind of the Atlantic Division.

Sobbing, Johnny broke the jam: the boys and girls came tumbling out. Johnny yanked the young driver from his seat and lunged for safety with the fear-paralyzed fellow in his arms.

And he made it—just as an eerie, rising shriek came from the 800—and a sound the division never forgot. The scream of a man taking full in the face the incalculable fury of two hundred pounds of hell-broth!

The over-age steam had blown itself free. Then came another terrifying noise, a sort of whispered *whupp-whupp* of flames, and the empty school bus had become a blazing furnace.

Johnny plunged blindly into the cloud of steam, groping for Duncan. But Guantanamo Smith was ahead of him. Pretty soon the big, burly griever stag-

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gered out of the roaring whiteness with the limp figure of the little convict-brakeman in his arms. Tight-lipped and gently, he laid his human burden, still living, on the ground. Steam boiled from the man's clothing; the sight was ghastly.

Johnny bent over and put his lips close to the dying man's ear. "The kids got out," he said. "Duncan, you saved them!"

The brakeman gave a faint indication that he understood.

"Mother of God," whispered Guantanamo Smith, "please make it quick!"

And as they waited, the Angel of Death, hovering low, settled at last and mercifully on the scalded, pain-wracked body of Brandt Duncan. The watchers heaved a tense sigh of relief.

Guantanamo said it, the day the division buried Duncan: "Whatever he was back there, we don't want to know. All we remember is what he did at the end. That's why we're givin' him a trackside grave with full Brotherhood honors."

Yes, they laid him to rest beside the rails that glinted brightly under a hot sun, in the dubious shade of a lone palmetto tree. The SG&A Railway ran a special train to the funeral, and just about everybody who could get time off rode it. One end of the baggage car was heaped with floral emblems. The local of the Brotherhood of Railroad Trainmen was represented, of course; Guantanamo saw to that. The president of the road sent flowers. So did the mayor of Port City, and the district school, and the parents of the kids who'd been snatched from a fiery death, and a lot of others.

Buck Quillen, the division super, forgot his ulcers long enough to attend the rites, along with Trainmaster Harrison, the cinder dick Les White, and the

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rest. It was Johnny who insisted on paying for the granite headstone.

"A debt I owe," he said.

And on the other side of the track, Superintendent Quillen turned the first shovel of earth for a hole into which the section men rooted a station sign bearing the name *Duncan*. Everybody knew there wasn't a station nor any kind of building for miles around, but they called the place Duncan just the same, and Duncan it is today.

That was years ago. A lot of things have changed. The SG&A is now using diesel power, for one thing. But the trackside grave is still there, and the depot sign, and the lone palmetto. Gandy dancers keep the sepulcher green, the marker stones whitewashed. And once a year, on the anniversary of the oiltrain wreck, the district school closes for the day to let the pupils and their teacher take a bus ride to the desolate grave with flowers of remembrance.

Even today, the long sleek diesels hoot a mournful salute while passing milestone 51.2 in the wasteland north of Port City. Now and then a passenger from up North will ask the conductor about it. And in reply, for the umpteenth time, he'll tell the story of a man who, in one shining moment, found a purpose for a life that had been sidetracked somewhere along the line.

Mrs. Union Station

BY DOUG WELCH

MRS. UNION STATION

It is far from uncommon for a man or woman to win enduring fame for a single work of art, a story, a poem, a painting, or even a single line of impassioned oratory and to be considered a master of his particular field of endeavor without ever adding another contribution. In the canons of railroad fiction writing, Douglas Welch occupies an analogous standing because of a solitary railroad story, "Mrs. Union Station" deserves its position of high esteem because few stories in the genre have ever so successfully combined so many integral elements important to the creation of a good railroad story. First, it is above all fine and authentic railroad from a strictly technical standpoint. Second, it incorporates important elements of the model-railroading craze which has seized this nation in a seemingly permanent grip. Third, it is competently, entertainingly, and adroitly told, combining all the important elements of good story-telling. The result is a story which does credit to The Saturday Evening Post, which first bought and published it in 1937, and to its author, Douglas Welch. A Seattle man most of his life, despite the fact that he was born in Boston, Mr. Welch has spent many years as a reporter on such newspapers as The Cleveland Plain Dealer, The Seattle Times, The Tacoma News, and The Seattle Post-Intelligencer.

WITH HIS WATCH in hand, and with an expression of vast displeasure on his usually placid face, John H. Alston, superintendent of the Lonely Valley Division of the Chicago, Omaha, Salt Lake & Pacific Railway, watched the locomotive and ten sleek cars of No. 6, eastbound, otherwise the Hurricane, slowly thread their way into the Grand River station.

"Twenty-seven and a half minutes late," he inform-

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ed Conductor A. L. Benson and the world in general. "What the hell do you think you're running? A street car?"

"We had trouble up the line," said Conductor Benson softly, with the prim satisfaction of a man who has a perfectly valid excuse.

"What kind of trouble?"

"A woman passenger pulled the air on us."

"I don't believe it," said Superintendent Alston flatly. "I don't believe there is a woman anywhere in the world who knows how to pull the air on a train."

"That's what I thought," said Conductor Benson. "But I found out."

"If she was here," said Superintendent Alston, brightening at the thought, "I would punch her right square in the nose."

"Oh, no, you wouldn't," said Conductor Benson dreamily. "Not this little pretty, you wouldn't!"

"Here we spend a million bucks to cut the running time over our division by twenty-one minutes," said Superintendent Alston, "and then some Jane with a two-dollar ticket pulls the air on us because she forgot to turn off the gas heater or leave a note for the milkman, I suppose."

"It's a very sad story," said Conductor Benson, "and it will take me some time to tell it."

"Well, we missed our connections here with the Dixie Mail," said Superintendent Alston, "so you can just come into my office and dictate your story to my stenographer, and I will let you do the explaining to the general manager's office instead of me."

A young woman passenger (dictated Conductor Benson) pulled the air on us at Junction at 12:19 P.M.

today, and pretty near stood the train on end. She got on at Salsburg only about nine minutes before. We have a slow order over the P. B. & T. crossover at Junction, and we were approaching this crossover at greatly reduced speed—I would say not faster than eight miles an hour—when this young pretty makes an emergency application from the rear parlor car. We stop with a hard jolt, but we don't pull any draw-bars and we don't slide the wheels much. Engineer John Hadley claims he finds a flat on one of his drivers as big as a dot, and he comes back and says he is going to spank this passenger personally, right now. He even starts toward one of the Pullmans to borrow a hair-brush, but the passenger begins to cry, so he doesn't. I wouldn't have let him anyway, on account of our slogan, "The Passenger is Always Right, Except When He Doesn't Have His Fare." We are delayed twenty-four minutes at Junction while we look the train over. A couple of passengers took headers in the aisle, but nobody was really hurt.

The young pretty who makes this emergency application is a Mrs. Steven Applebee, of 4531 Wandon Drive, Salsburg, and although she wants to get off the train at Junction, I make her stay aboard until we reach Central City. We don't usually make Central City on this run, but after I hear the little lady's story, I figure it will be all right with the company if we let her off, so she can grab No. 11 back to Salsburg. She is a very fetching little package, this Mrs. Applebee, and she is practically up to her ears in trouble if she don't catch No. 11.

I ask this pretty how she knows where the emergency air valve is located on the parlor car, and she says her husband is a model-railway fan, and she

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knows where everything is, including the patch on the fireman's jumper.

"But, madam," I say, "don't you know that when you make an emergency application from the back of a train, you are liable to break that train right in half, and also maybe flatten every wheel?"

"Certainly I know it," she replies, "but I wanted to get off."

There is a fellow in the car who tries to break into the conversation a couple of times, and she says to him: "Go away. I don't ever want to see you again. You are hateful."

"But, Helene," he protests, "what have I done?"

"You are a wolf in sheep's clothing."

This surprises me greatly, because he is only wearing a double-breasted blue serge suit. Well, the passenger begins to cry again, so I take her into an unoccupied compartment in the Chicago sleeper, and she tells me the whole story. This is a very sad story, and I practically have my handkerchief out a couple of times, and I will not omit any of the details, because I think it will help explain the frame of mind of a pretty who makes an emergency application on a fine train like No. 6.

"Have I mentioned that she is a very classy-looking little doll?" asked Conductor Benson.

"You haven't been talking about anything else," said Superintendent Alston. "Go on!"

Well, this Mrs. Applebee (continued Conductor Benson) is not what you call the thinking type, but she is certainly a choice piece of scenery, equal to any-

thing we have got on the Mountain or Coast divisions. She is a cuddly little pretty with great big eyes, and she is very innocent and trusting.

"I am going to tell you everything," she says, "because you have a kind face. And if you don't let me off this train pretty soon, the line will be responsible for breaking up a family, and I know it doesn't want to be pointed out as a home wrecker."

"I should say not," I reply, "because we always advertise as 'The Family Line.'"

Well, it seems like this Mrs. Applebee has been married about a year, and her husband is a salesman. He is also a model-railway fan, but she never suspected it until after they were engaged. She says love must have made her blind. She says being married to a model-railway fan is a very terrible thing, and there isn't anything you can do for it except take an occasional headache tablet.

It seems like before they are married, her husband—his name is Steve—drives her every evening to a spot on Ransom Hill where there is a first-rate view of the Salsburg depot and the lower yards, and also the city dump. At first she thinks he only goes there because it is a quiet place to park. But it seems like very often, right in the middle of a pretty speech, he pulls out his watch and says: "It's just about time for the 7:23." And even while he is holding her hand he counts the cars on the 7:23, and if there is an extra diner or a private car, he can't talk about anything else the rest of the night.

She says he also takes her to all the moving pictures which have trains in them. And after the show, maybe she says: "I don't think that girl is much of an actress." But he says: "Yes, but did you see that big articulated 2-8-8-4 Northern Pacific freight loco-

tive?" And once she has to sit through a double bill twice, so he can get a second look at the inside of a Wabash signal tower.

Well, before the wedding he spends two solid weeks reading time-tables. They are going to New York City on their honeymoon. And on the afternoon of the wedding, the best man says to him: "Now there isn't anything to be nervous about." And Steve says: "I'm worried about those connections in Chicago. Maybe I ought to have taken the Baltimore and Ohio."

Well, the ceremony is over, and they get aboard our train, and they are pulling out of Salsburg. Mrs. Applebee reaches over and pats his hand. "And now I belong to you, Steve, dear" she says. "I am your own little Helene and I don't belong to anybody else."

But he is looking out the window at a switch engine, and he says: "I can tell one of those a mile away."

"One of what, dear?"

"That goat," he says. "That yard hog. It's a rebuilt job. Used to be a road engine once. You can tell by the big boiler and the firebox. They've put small drivers under her, but she still has a road engine's line."

"Well, that's very nice, dear, I am sure," she says.

"He must have seen old 768," commented Superintendent Alston. "She's a fine old engine. Yes, sir, a fine engine."

"Yes," said Conductor Benson, "but listen."

It takes them about four days to get to New York City (said Conductor Benson) because they don't stay on one road more than a couple of hours or so. I can hardly believe it, but Mrs. Applebee tells me they use

our line to Chicago, and then go to New York by way of the New York Central, the Pennsylvania, the Nickel Plate and the Lackawanna. She thinks they are also on the Erie, too, but it is late at night. Anyway, they get on and off trains so many times that she begins to feel like they are being followed by someone.

"Are you sure, Steve, dear," she asks, "that we aren't running away from something?"

"No, lovey dovey," he says; "as long as I am in this part of the country, I want to see as much as possible of the railroads and their equipment."

And another day, when they have two hours to wait for a connection, she suggests they take a bus.

"Good heavens," he says. "Do you think I want it to get back to the Salsburg Model-Railway Club that I rode on a bus!"

When they finally get to New York, the very first night he takes her down to the Grand Central Terminal to listen to the train announcing. And the next morning while he is shaving in their hotel room, which overlooks the Pennsylvania Station, he calls out all the stations between New York and Boston on the New York, New Haven & Hartford's shore line, and all the stations between New York and Washington, D. C., on the Pennsylvania.

By this time, of course, any other woman would either call in the house physician or a lawyer, but, like I said before, this Mrs. Applebee is a sweet little thing just trying to get along, and she doesn't realize that coming events cast their shadows before. She tries to get into the spirit of things. She shrieks with girlish glee, she tells me, when Steve takes her up into New England and upper New York State to ride on the Central Vermont and the Rutland. He likes the Central Vermont all right, but he is somewhat disappoint-

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ed in the Rutland because the brakeman wants to talk baseball instead of block signals.

In New York City, of course, they ride all the subways. Sometimes they wait a half hour at Times Square until a train comes along which has a front window and a vacant seat. Steve sits in this seat and peers into the tunnel ahead, and he don't say much except "We are coming up on that red block pretty fast" or "It doesn't seem to me they allow enough headway between trains." He tries to involve a motorman at the Coney Island station in an argument as to which is best, straight air or automatic air. But the motorman doesn't seem to care whether he has to stop his train with straight air or automatic air, or by dragging his feet.

"That bum ought to be driving a milk wagon," Steve says. "I bet he don't know a brake shoe from a pair of kid's rubbers."

Mrs. Applebee makes a big hit with her husband one morning by imitating a news butcher.

"Cigars, cigarettes, tobacco, candy, fresh fruit and souvenir post cards," she says.

"Honey," he tells her, "you're wonderful."

"It sounds like a great honeymoon," commented Superintendent Alston.

"Wait until you hear what happened when they got home," said Conductor Benson. "This is where it really gets sad."

Well, they no sooner arrive in Salbsurg (continued Conductor Benson) and settle down in their new house than he invites her to a meeting of the model-

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railway club. Of course, he has talked almost constantly about the club ever since he met her, but she hasn't any clear idea of it. She thinks maybe they all get down on their hands and knees and pull choo-choos around. To tell the truth, whenever he starts talking about locomotives and drawbars and valve gears and 3 per cent grades, she just sits and looks at him with awe, and thinks how handsome he is, and how nice and kind his eyes are, and what a lucky, lucky girl she is to be married to such a splendid creature.

"I have asked some of the other fellows to invite their wives too," he says. "I don't see why we can't all work and enjoy the system together. I think you girls will get as much fun out of it as we do. Of course, you won't be able to run trains right away. You will have to start by operating some of our manual switches and crossing gates, but after a while you can work your way up into an occasional local freight."

From what Mrs. Applebee tells me, the club has an O-gauge system in the basement of the Johnson home. You know, Johnson, the Salsburg banker. Each man has contributed something like a locomotive or a string of box cars or maybe a couple of Pullmans. The track and the equipment—even the stations, crossing gates, bridges and signal towers—are built strictly according to scale, about a fourth of an inch to a foot in real life. They call this railroad the Chicago, Alton & West Coast, and it has about five hundred feet of track arranged in loops. One of these loops runs out of the basement and circles through the Johnson rock garden.

Mrs. Applebee says the club meets three times a week. One man sits at a table and acts as dispatcher, writing up train orders. Another makes up passenger and freight trains in the Chicago yards, and each of

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the others has a division, and is responsible for the trains that run over it.

The locomotives are powered with electric motors and they pick up their juice from a third rail. The idea is never to touch a train with your hands if you can help it.

Well, the Applebees hurry through dinner this night because it is a terrible thing to be late and delay the trains. In fact, Mrs. Applebee says the only reason her friends, the Browns, are hardly speaking to one another is because Mrs. Brown had to go and have her baby on the very night that Mr. Brown was supposed to sit in as relief dispatcher.

When the Applebees arrive at the Johnson home, she finds the crowd down in the basement, the ladies gathered politely off in one corner, pretty breathless about the whole business. Mrs. Applebee says her first reaction to what she sees is that Mrs. Johnson must be a very patient woman to let her husband and his friends muss her basement up that way. Mrs. Applebee says Mrs. Johnson's laundress is probably a contortionist. There are tracks at various levels all round the walls, across the floor, and even suspended from the ceiling. It doesn't make much sense to Mrs. Applebee.

Steve walks over to this banker, who is sitting at the table, and he says: "Let's have the order for No. 17."

"No. 17," says the banker, "meets No. 16 at Alton and No. 402 at East Kansas City. You've also got a slow order over two sections east of Alton on account of track repairs."

Well, Steve walks over to the Chicago depot and yards, which is on top of the Johnson workbench, and he stands beside a locomotive and seven Pullmans.

"Train No. 17!" he calls out. "The Continental

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Limited! Now leaving on Track 4 for Pontiac, Atlanta, Springfield, Alton, Kansas City, Denver, Salt Lake City, San Francisco, and all point west! All a-b-o-a-r-d!"

"I think you're making some of this up," protested Superintendent Alston.

"No, I'm not," replied Conductor Benson. "I'm telling it just like she did, only I'm not so bitter about it."

Steve throws a switch (continued Conductor Benson) and the train starts moving. Mrs. Applebee notices that all the men have their watches out. It seems like the running time is figured in seconds, and any member who turns a train over to another division late has to have a pretty good reason. Like, for instance, the night the Johnson Airedale tried to take a bite out of the observation-lounge car of No. 15, the Kansas City Flyer, when it was swinging around his kennel at a good seventy-mile clip. They keep the Airedale chained up during the club meetings now.

The Continental Limited races around the wall behind the furnace, speeds toward the washtubs and disappears into a tunnel in the wall of the fruit closet. It comes out again at a higher level and stops at a small, lighted station.

"No. 17 arriving at Alton on time!" says Steve. And, according to Mrs. Applebee, his face is glowing like the night he proposed.

The ladies follow this train over the other divisions all the way to San Francisco, which is at the foot of the garden, and they utter glad little cries over the locomotive's headlight and the way the light shines

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out of the car windows. And pretty soon some of the ladies are assigned to various duties. Mrs. Applebee gets a manual switch in the Chicago yards.

She doesn't understand the operation of this switch very well, and she gives it a yank while a freight train is passing through. It seems like seven cars are derailed.

"For goodness' sakes," she laughs. "I guess I am not much of a switchman, am I?"

And she picks up one of the cars and starts to put it back on the track.

"Don't touch those cars!" her husband shouts.

She says her husband is acting like he just caught her making eyes at the iceman. His tone is quite sharp.

"The only way we can get those reefers back on the rails," he says, "is with the wrecker."

Well, they bring the wrecking train down from Alton, and the other men gather around, shaking their heads and saying "Tch, tch, tch!" It appears that what Mrs. Applebee has done is a very terrible thing indeed. It is the first derailment on the Chicago, Alton and West Coast Railway in three weeks, they tell her. They spend a solid hour getting those cars back on the track without using their hands.

"Oh, let's have something to drink," one of the ladies suggests.

"I should say not," says Johnson. "Didn't you ever hear of Rule G?"

"Why, no," says the lady.

"Well, Rule G is the no-drinking rule on every railway in the country," says the banker, "and we don't drink while we are on duty. Not on the C., A. & W. C., we don't!"

"No," explains the banker's wife, "not since old

Judge Semple got liquored up one night and staged a head-on collision in Tunnel 5. He was expelled!"

When the Applebees are leaving that night, it is this same Mrs. Johnson who gives Mrs. Applebee a warm, sympathetic little squeeze of the hand.

"Poor dear," she whispers. "You'll learn to be a railroad man's wife one of these days, but the period of learning is terrible. When I was getting accustomed to it I used to have hideous dreams. I was always being chased by a timetable. And don't think that I don't have to be constantly on guard, even now. For three years I have been fighting to keep Mr. Johnson from building a trestle right across the goldfish pond. The goldfish pond is Great Salt Lake."

"Of course, I don't blame you, dear," says Steve, on the way home, "but did you ever see anyone turn a switch on a regular railroad while a train was passing over it?"

"I guess not," she says.

"All right, then," he says. "Why did you do it?"

"I don't know, Steve," she replies, "and let's not discuss the matter any more."

The next time the club meets she pleads a headache, and she is not surprised when Steve later reports that all the other wives seem to have headaches too.

It isn't long after this that the club decides to change over from a third-rail to a two-rail system, which involves a good deal of rewiring and some track relaying. Steve is busy at the Johnson's every weekday night, and all day Sunday he spends his time at his own kitchen table, putting together a New York Central Hudson-type locomotive. The parts for this cost him fifty-eight dollars, and it means that Mrs. Applebee has to struggle along another month without drapes for the living room.

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Mrs. Applebee says she sometimes wishes Steve would be attracted to another woman, because she would know what to do about that. She would get herself some snappy new clothes and try doing her hair differently. But she says there is nothing a woman can do whose husband is suddenly that way about a New York Central Hudson-type locomotive with a feed-water heater, a Baker valve gear, alligator cross-heads and a booster on the trailer truck.

"Yes," commented Superintendent Alston, profoundly stirred, "you take these Hudson-type engines—they're pretty, all right, but one of our 5200 Mallets can outpull two of them."

"Yes," agreed Conductor Benson, "but I never yet heard of anyone going nuts over a Mallet."

Well, anyway (said Conductor Benson) Mrs. Applebee wants to go upstate to attend the university homecoming, but Steve is just putting the paint job on his new engine, and he can't possibly leave it. So Mrs. Applebee drives up with a girl friend. And it is there she meets this Tommy Germaine. From what I gather, this Tommy Germaine is Mrs. Applebee's sugar pie when she is in college. He spots her at the alumni dance the night before the big game, and he prances right over.

"Well, if it isn't the lovely lady again," he says. "I swear, you grow more beautiful every day!"

"Oh, Tommy!" she says. "The same old Tommy! Even the same old line."

"You're married!" he pouts. "I read about it in the papers. I sulked for weeks. Wouldn't eat anything but

a little barley broth. People tell me I almost faded away."

"Oh, Tommy," she laughs. He sweeps her out on the dance floor.

"By the way," he says, "what does your lord and master do, besides hurry home every night to his sweet little wife?"

"He's assistant to the vice president of the Chicago, Alton & West Coast Railway," she says.

"I never heard of it," he says.

"It's a model railway," she explains. "He's really district sales manager for International Small Appliances Company, but the model railway is his life's work."

"I should think," says this Tommy Germaine, "that you would be his life's work."

"Oh, hush up," she giggles.

Well, he takes her to the game next day, and that evening they go with two other couples to a little road-house to dance. Mrs. Applebee says that it's just like a month at the beach. She feels young and attractive and appreciated again.

"I'm going to see more of you, I hope," this Tommy says. "My company has assigned me to the Salsburg office, and I move next week. I'd like to meet your husband."

"You'll love Steve," she tells him. "And if you want to make a real hit with him, bring along a couple of timetables or the picture of a caboose."

She has such a good time at the home-coming that she feels almost guilty when she returns home. She tells Steve everything.

He listens to her kind of impatiently and says: "Well, that's fine. I wish I could have gone up there

myself. Do you know what Johnson said about my engine?"

"No," she says. "What?"

"He claims the paint is too black. He says it ought to be more of a gun-metal shade. What do you think?"

"The first coat looked perfectly all right to me," she assures him.

"I'm glad you say that," Steve says, very pleased.

This Tommy Germaine doesn't lose any time. He isn't in Salsburg two days before he telephones.

"It's me," he says. "And hungering for a real old-fashioned home-cooked meal, if I may be so suggestive."

"You may be, Tommy," she says, "and you may come right out tonight, if you don't mind corned beef and cabbage."

Steve and this Tommy hit it off from the start.

"I hear you're interested in railroads," says Tommy. "An uncle of mine works in the passenger department of the Santa Fe."

"Is that so?" comments Steve with great interest. "That's a mighty good road, the Santa Fe. They put out a very readable timetable."

Steve has Tommy out to the model-railway club as his guest a couple of times, and gets him admitted to the Forward Salsburg and Wide Awake Luncheon clubs. It is not long before this Tommy is practically a member of the family, and he thinks nothing of dropping in unannounced. Mrs. Applebee also sees a good deal of this Tommy at country-club dances and on the golf course. From what I gather, Steve is not only busy with the model-railway gang but his company has also extended his sales territory and he has to spend considerable time away from home. So he

begins to rely more and more on this Tommy to keep his social end up.

No matter what the neighbors and the old boys and girls on the clubhouse porch say, however, Mrs. Applebee is not too pleased with the arrangement. She doesn't mind Steve's trips out of town, but she is certainly reaching what she calls "the saturation point" concerning locomotives and railroad trains. The big blowoff comes the night of the country-club formal.

Mrs. Applebee goes to some trouble and expense to get her hair done differently, but all Steve says is: "What's the matter? You look kind of funny tonight." He dances with her a couple of times, then turns her over to this Tommy. Steve ducks away to the bar, where the model-railway club is having a special meeting. It seems like one of the boys wants to introduce a streamlined engine into the system like the Milwaukee uses on the Hiawatha on the Twin City run out of Chicago. The rest of the boys are thumbs down. What is the sense, they are asking, of building a beautiful model engine, then covering it with a piece of painted tin which hides all the working parts?

"I don't know," says Steve, stepping into the argument. "If all the other lines are going into streamlining, I don't think the Chicago, Alton and West Coast can afford to hold off. Don't forget we are running through highly competitive territory. I think it will be all right to have one streamline job, and maybe call it the Albatross."

"Who ever heard," one of the boys says, "of naming a train after a bird?"

"All right, smart guy," says Steve. "Didn't you ever hear of the famous Flying Crow on the Kansas

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City Southern? Or The Gull on the Boston and Maine?"

"You've got me there," the guy admits.

"While he was listing trains which are named after birds," said Superintendent Alston, "why didn't he mention The Flamingo on the Louisville and Nashville, and the Southern Pacific's Lark and the New Haven's Owl?"

"I guess he didn't think about them," apologized Conductor Benson.

While Steve is all wrapped up in this discussion (continued Conductor Benson) Mrs. Applebee is dancing with Tommy and getting madder every minute. Finally she sends Tommy to get Steve.

"Steve," she says sharply, "I want to go home!"

"What's the matter?" he asks.

"Never mind," she says. "I want to go home."

In the automobile he details all this streamlining argument, but she makes no comment. When he puts the car away and comes into the house, he finds her standing in the middle of the living-room floor, looking pretty grim.

"Steve," she says, "sit down!"

"Why, what's the matter, honey?" he asks.

"Steve," she says, "you and I are going to have a talk."

"Have I done something?" he asks, getting alarmed.

"Steve," she says, "we have been married eleven months. Am I still as pretty as you used to say I was?"

"Why, of course, honey," he replies, puzzled.

"And I keep a nice, clean, comfortable house for you, too, don't I?"

"Why, sure," he replies. "Look, if I've done something that—"

"And I'm economical and helpful and sympathetic and encouraging, am I not, Steve?"

"Sure you are, honey," he says. "I don't understand—"

"All right," she says. "Then why don't you pay more attention to me? Don't you love me any more?"

"Oh, I see what you mean," he says. "I guess you're sore about tonight. I did disappear for quite a long time. We got to talking about that new train, whether we ought to have a beaver-tail end or a conventional open-end observation car."

"It isn't just tonight, Steve," she says. "It's every day and every night."

"Why, gosh, Helene," he says. "I had no idea that—"

"That's all you talk about from breakfast until bedtime. I sometimes feel as if I were married to a union station."

"But, Helene," he says. "I had no idea—"

"And I try to be patient and understanding," she says, "but now I have reached the point where I will throw my things into a suitcase and walk right out of this house if I ever hear you speak of a locomotive and coal car again."

"Not coal car, Helene," he says gently. "Call it a tender. Coal cars are called hoppers and have nothing to do with a locomotive."

"You see?" she says, and she bursts into tears.

Well, he puts his arm around her, and he says:

"Gosh, Helene, I never realized. I won't ever look

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at another train again. I will even turn my head when we drive by the depot."

"No, I don't want that," she says. "I just want you to love me a little more."

So for a couple of weeks they have a regular love nest. Of course, every so often he will speak of something crude like a seventy-ton Lehigh Valley hopper or a New York, Ontario & Western caboose, but she realizes this is purely force of habit. She isn't too severe with him. As long as he is in a flowers-and-candy mood 90 per cent of the time, she is not going to begrudge him the other 10 per cent. She knows that some men are solitary drinkers, she says, and that some men chase after other women, and that some men spill cigar ashes down the front of their vests, and that there are no absolutely perfect husbands on the market.

In fact, Steve is so nice to her that she feels maybe she has been almost cruel; she catches him one night, sitting on a soap box in the garage, reading a new issue of the Missouri Pacific timetable. He folds it up quick with a guilty expression, like she had caught him smoking corn silk.

"I was just wondering what time the Scenic Limited runs out of St. Louis," he says.

"You poor, dear and abused man," she says. "I didn't mean that you couldn't read timetables in the house if you want to. And, as a matter of fact, I see no reason why you shouldn't attend the regular meetings of the club."

She is feeling, she tells me, perhaps too generous at the moment, because you can't taper off a model-railway fan like you can a drug addict. Show him an

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eccentric rod and he's off again. You've got to keep him away from machinery and the sound of locomotive whistles, and put him on a soft diet.

Well, they coast along happily until today, which is their wedding anniversary. Mrs. Applebee says they are figuring on driving up to Reflection Lake for the day. It's about a hundred miles, and they plan to start at nine o'clock this morning. Well, they are just locking up the house when the phone rings. He answers it.

"Helene," he shouts. "Barkerville is in town!"

"Who is Barkerville?" she asks, with a sinking feeling.

"He's the owner of the famous Sunrise Valley Model Railway in California," Steve says, "and that's the line that the movies use for all their trick shots of railway wrecks. He's at the Johnsons', looking our system over, and the boys want me to come over."

"Oh, Steve," she says, very sadly.

"I'll just be a minute," he promises. "I only want to shake hands with him."

"Steve," she says, "today is our wedding anniversary."

"Don't you worry, honey," he says. "I'll be back in no time. You wait in the house until I honk the horn."

Well, this is nine o'clock. At ten o'clock she telephones the Johnson house and Mrs. Johnson says the whole crowd has gone down to the Talbot home to look at a tin-plater Talbot is converting into a scale job. She calls the Talbot home, and Mrs. Talbot says yes, they were there, but they have gone somewhere else, and she doesn't care where they have gone, and she doesn't care if they never come back, because Barkerville woke up the baby by imitating the way

the Western Pacific sounds in the Feather River Canyon.

At eleven o'clock Mrs. Applebee is fighting mad. And then the doorbell rings. It isn't Steve. It's this Tommy Germaine.

"Oh, Tommy," she sobs. Well, she tells him the whole story, and he sits there looking like he has just found out that Steve spends his evenings going around peeping into windows.

"This is no way to treat a sensitive, pretty and high-spirited woman like yourself," Tommy Germaine says. "This is ghastly."

"I am going away," she says, "to teach him a lesson. He can't do this to me."

"I think you are right," says this Tommy.

She writes Steve a note and props it up on the living-room table.

"Where are you going?" Tommy asks her while she is packing a few clothes.

"I'm going to Grand River, to mother," she says.

"It's not far," Tommy says. "I will accompany you a little way. You need a friend along at a time like this."

"Good old Tommy," she says. "You are a real friend, aren't you?"

When he is getting their tickets at the depot, he says: "I hate trains. Stuffy old cars and green plush seats. Smoke and cinders and jolting and bumping."

"It's not quite so bad as that," she assures him. "In fact, this is a new train we're going on. Aluminum alloy and air-conditioned."

And when we get under way, she looks out the window and spots this same yard hog.

"It used to be a road engine," she says idly. "You can tell by the firebox and the big boiler."

"Helene," he says, not hearing her, "there is something I want to tell you. I couldn't have told you before. Perhaps I ought not to tell you now. But I've always had a certain feeling about you, and that feeling lately has grown into something pretty important."

"Please, Tommy," she says.

"Helene," he says, "for the past few weeks I haven't been able to think of anything else but how nice it would be to settle down in the country, in a sweet little house—"

"Tommy," she says, "you musn't say such things. Not now, anyway. Later perhaps. You are very sweet, Tommy, and I like you very much."

"And just settle down," he continued dreamily, "with a sweet wife and my workbench, and—"

"Your workbench?" she echoes. "What do you do with a workbench?"

"I make model ships," he says.

"You make what?" she demands, half rising in her seat.

"Model ships," he replies. "I've got over fifty already. Some of them have been exhibited in the greatest—"

"Why you heel!" she storms. "You insufferable heel!"

And she runs back in the car and pulls the air on us. She says she realizes then that all men are nuts in one way or another, and Steve is no worse than average.

"Why, you fathead!" roared Superintendent Alston. "Why didn't you let her off at Junction? You left her in a pretty mess. Her husband probably got that note she left!"

"Don't get so hot!" shouted Conductor Benson.

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"That's why I stopped at Central City. She went into the station to telephone a neighbor to get the key under the back-door mat and take the letter off the living-room table."

"Did the neighbor get it?" demanded Superintendent Alston.

"Certainly," said Conductor Benson. "I held the train until she came out of the station to tell me. And I told the agent to flag down No. 11 and put her on board. She was home again in only an hour."

"Well, that's better," said Superintendent Alston. "We railroad men have got to stick together."

"But the funny thing to me," said Conductor Benson, "is the idea of all these grown men playing with model trains. It amused me so much that the next time I am in Salsburg, I'm going to run over to the Johnson house to see what they've got."

"You and me both," said Superintendent Alston. "We may be able to give them some pointers."

Train Going

BY WILLIAM SAROYAN

TRAIN GOING

During the thirties, a literary movement centering on the short story flourished in the United States. At the forefront of this movement was Story, a nationally circulated literary magazine dedicated to advancing the short story as an art form, and constantly on the search for new talent. Probably the most successful short story this periodical ever published, a tale which made both the author and the magazine a center of attention, was "The Daring Young Man on the Flying Trapeze" by William Saroyan, published in 1934. Previous to that time, Saroyan had seen publication of his fiction only in Harrenik, an Armenian magazine, from which he later edited an anthology of fiction. After that, Saroyan went on to win the Pulitzer prize for drama in 1940 for the play "The Time of Your Life." He made headlines by refusing to accept the award and stating: "Commerce has no right to patronize art." Probably his most famous book is the novel The Human Comedy, which was subsequently made into a very successful motion picture. In his younger days, Saroyan worked first as a telegraph messenger and then as manager of a telegraph office in San Francisco. This gave him an insight into rail-roading which is evident in a numbr of his stories, the most successful of which is probably "Train Going".

WHAT hearts break at railway stations, and how the tears fall. How the eye blurs with agony and the torn flesh aches. How the nerves tremble, the tongue goes dumb, the throat dries, and the million moments of yesterday roll away to death, the bell of the train ringing, the steel wheels beginning slowly to move, beginning slowly to carry away the tragic hours of a man's life with a woman. Stay, do not go: let us go back and mend the broken pieces. Let us return to the errors and

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make them right, so that we can breathe again. Let us go to each place of error and begin from the beginning. And before the train is too far away for him any longer to see her face, his heart rushes back to each place they knew together: the dull quiet rooms of morning and night: the chairs and tables: the windows: the restaurants: the theatres: the streets: the parks: the trees and lakes: the sky. And the conversations over the telephone. Before the train has gone too far, he has returned to the places of many moments, stalked through them like a maniac, a ghost seeking in the world her ghost, the lost in himself seeking the lost in her, and not finding. Before the wheels of the train have turned five times he has run through the world and destroyed all things of error, and he has left the dull quiet rooms roaring in flames: the world must end and begin again. And all he does is stand in one place and smoke a cigarette, knowing it can never be. Knowing the errors shall stand. Knowing the train will disappear in a moment, and he will return alone to the places they knew, and live, though it would be best to die, and he turns away and disappears in the world.

In one place it is a young Englishman, in another it is an Austrian or an Italian or a Spaniard or a Russian. In every language *he* knows wordlessly it shall always be so: error and glory shall be together, inhale and exhale.

The bell ringing, the wagon beginning to carry away the long quiet moments of a mother's heart in a babe born, and now grown to the size of a soldier, a young man going away in a train: for England, for France, for Austria, for Russia, for Finland. To have a gun. To walk in line. To fire accurately. To obey. To salute. To sing the national anthem. To be brave. To love England France Austria Russia Finland. To love life. To love the earth. The poor woman's heart torn out of her

TRAIN GOING

flesh, and the boy smiling at her. It is the earth, it is not the nations. The nations are not loved, it is the small part of the earth each nation occupies, and it is the small part of each city or country in which the mother lived and saw the boy grow, and now she is crying, she cannot help it, it is too much, it is too strange, he is on a train and he is going away to be a soldier, he is in the national uniform, and now he is going away to begin to learn there may be war and it is best to forget home. But how can he forget Finland? How can he forget the streets of the French villages? How can he forget the woods of Vienna? And everywhere the train keeps moving: it is by schedule, and at first it moves slowly, making all who weep feel there is still time to change everything, the whole order of the world. No airplanes for bombing cities. No cannon. No tanks. No machine guns. No armies at all. The wars have all been fought. We have learned that death is the only answer, and we can wait till we die of old age. We have learned it is impossible to be brave, that it is weakness to be brave. We have learned that no conflict has ever existed between the soil of England and the soil of France, of Finland and Russia, of Japan and China. We have learned that ostentation is impressive but ridiculous, and all the poor mothers groan while the train begins to move.

The mothers of life stand in the railway stations of the world and weep. And they know, as the lover knows, that it shall ever be so. They will never understand what force it is that has made it so. They will never know why it is so, but they will know it will never change. They will go back to their houses and to the dull aching moments of life again bleeding.

And the same bell ringing, the same train beginning to go, and there he is in the station, the same as ever, eternally there, the small newsboy with no friend, the

child of the world, the street-boy, standing in vast loneliness with eyes widened with love for the traveler: the lifted hand, to nobody, to everybody, good-bye, and the fierce smile of relationship: Jesus Christ, we are alive together in the same world, and now you are going away, good-bye. And he runs; to stay a little longer nearer you whom I do not know. And he keeps running, and the train begins to move faster, and he begins to run faster, waving at everybody, good-bye, we shall meet again, and this is not the end, good-bye.

Big Engine

BY WILLIAM EDWARD HAYES

BIG ENGINE

Acting on Booth Tarkington's advice, William Edward Hayes turned from railroading to newspaper reporting in 1921. It seems, however, that once the railroad has laid hold of a man it stays with him, to reappear in one form or another later on. This was the case with W. E. Hayes. As a youngster he spent all of his extra time doing chores around the Pennsylvania Railroad Station at Connellsville, Ohio. His objective in this was to learn telegraphy. At fourteen, he became a full-fledged railroad telegrapher. At fifteen, he obtained his first telegraph job on the Lake Erie and Western Railroad. As a boomer he worked on many railroads and in many places, as locomotive fireman, switchman, brakeman, train dispatcher, and "footboard yardmaster." This experience was later to be reflected in his railroad stories. After 1921 he worked for a time as a reporter on various newspapers, but in 1929 he accomplished a feat which has endeared him to railroad men and railroad literature. In 1909 the Frank A. Munsey Company began publication of a magazine which they called Railroad Man's Magazine. In 1919 this publication merged with Argosy. In 1929 William Hayes succeeded in persuading the Frank A. Munsey Company to reissue the magazine which is today called Railroad Magazine. He resigned after a year, but Railroad Magazine went on to become the bible of railroad men all over the continent. Hayes was a great success as a fiction writer, selling over three hundred stories to leading markets, including The Saturday Evening Post. He has three mystery novels to his credit and in 1953 his book, Iron Road to Empire: The History of the Rock Island Lines appeared. Today Hayes is living evidence that you can have your cake and eat it, too. He has since 1943 been employed as Executive Assistant in Charge of Public Relations on the Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific Railroad, and writes railroad material on the side.

MR. ELSTON LEFFINGWELL, being an exuberant and an expansive young man with a certain high quality of wide-awakeness, was that type of traffic-department solicitor who had at his finger tips every conceivable argument to beat down sales resistance. Right now the object on which those finger tips played was literally a trump card. The card was approximately seven inches long and four inches wide, and on the face of it was the photograph of a locomotive. On the reverse side was a lot of fine printing, the engine builder's technical specifications of weight, wheel base, piston diameter and stroke, drive-wheel dimensions, and other things. All of which Mr. Leffingwell had firmly fixed in mind.

Mr. Leffingwell, of course, had only the most vague idea of the meaning of "tractive effort," and virtually no idea at all of "factor of adhesion," but both terms were used on the back of the picture with impressive figures following them, so he, being that kind of salesman who needs only the skeleton framework of large-sounding figures to go on, used the terms convincingly when occasion demanded.

That such a demand was imminent at this particular moment, he was fully aware. He had been talking for a quarter of an hour to Mr. Artemus Holloweg, in the midst of impressive mahogany surroundings, and Mr. Holloweg had, to this point, registered exactly nothing. Mr. Holloweg's business was apples by the trainload from Spokane to St. Paul, and Mr. Leffingwell had certainly been making a play to get at least a portion of the Holloweg tonnage.

Mr. Holloweg, who had pale eyes of a rather frigid cast, and who was squat and bald and darkish pink of countenance, suddenly looked into Mr. Leffing-

well's bland young face. His thin lips got into motion. His voice was cold and harshly brief of sentences.

"Before you talk further, Leffingwell"—Mr. Holloweg held up a square, thick-fingered palm and wiggled it imperatively and impatiently—"you ain't telling me a thing about your railroad I don't know. Used it years ago. Couldn't move fast freight worth a damn. I used to give you men all my business, but the service got so rotten I had to look elsewhere. The other two Northwest lines; they're doing the trick for me. Been doing it seven years. Giving me eighty hours' freight time from Spokane to St. Paul. Why should I change? When your railroad can show me something better'n that, then you can take up my time. Otherwise—well, I'm busy."

Which was the cue for Mr. Leffingwell. He leaned forward, a tall, clean-cut man, flawlessly tailored. His finger tips came from his inner breast pocket. They brought the trump card with them.

"I can show you something better," Mr. Leffingwell said, with a fine sense of drama. "Take a look at that." The photograph of the locomotive took the attention of the frigid eyes.

"Why—why, that's nothing but an engine," Mr. Holloweg snapped gruffly.

"Yes. But what an engine! What does that picture convey to you first off? What is there about it that smacks you between the eyes right away?"

"Well, I see a number on the tender. No. 3104."

Mr. Holloweg was all but exasperating. Mr. Leffingwell, however, was used to ice. Mr. Leffingwell said with abruptness, "Power! Power, Mr. Holloweg. Speed and infinite strength. Look at those lines. No finer engines have yet been built. And what did we build 'em for?"

"Yes. What?" But Holloweg's eyes were still on the picture.

"For shippers such as you," Mr. Leffingwell answered. "Don't think I'm not familiar with your experiences with this road of ours years ago. I am. In those days the other two lines in our territory took our fast-freight business away from us because we couldn't make it fast. We were being whipped in Montana. Hard gradients, stiff curves, single-track operation. The other lines had the edge on us in that respect. I admit it now, and always have admitted it." Mr. Leffingwell had been with the railroad exactly one year. "But those big engines, Mr. Holloweg. Ah, there we have the answer to our problem. Those 3100's. They walk up hills and make level track out of mountain grades. They're more up-to-date than next year's finest motor car. Our own general superintendent of motive power designed them to meet our specific needs. And these engines, Mr. Holloweg, augmented by a personnel that has been educated to the highest spirit of shipper coöperation, give us a combination that you'll find unbeatable in the transportation world. Forty thousand men, Mr. Holloweg, working with you as one man—"

"These other roads," Mr. Holloweg interrupted, his square hand again upraised. "They got engines. Big engines. They got men too. And they give me eighty hours from Spokane to St. Paul. Eighty hours."

"Yes," said Mr. Leffingwell, with a gesture that took in all the territory west of the Twin Cities. "I grant you that. These other roads do have big engines, but none so big and fine as these 3100's. And with these engines of ours, and our great personnel morale, we have one final thing to present to you." Mr. Leffing-

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well here paused while the frigid eyes came up from a study of the picture of Engine No. 3104. Mr. Leffingwell's clean-shaven jowl shot forward, his dark eyes narrowed, his right hand folded into a fist. He said, "Seventy-two hours where you now get eighty. Seventy-two hours guaranteed!"

A hint of warmth now shot through the frigid stare. The thin lips spat, "You mean that?"

"One train to prove it, Mr. Holloweg. One train, no more. If we don't make the time for you, we'll never bother you again. If we do, we'll expect a big share of your tonnage. That's all." Mr. Leffingwell leaned forward tensely.

Mr. Holloweg's thick fingers stroked his heavy chin. He said, "Tell your men to get up steam."

It was in this same hour that, some eleven hundred miles west of St. Paul, Mr. Robert Lee Grant, called "Bowler" so long that he wouldn't have recognized his given names had he heard them, stood at a high desk in the crew room of the Bellew roundhouse. He looked like no fiction-story or motion-picture type of engineer this world has ever seen. The battered old derby which no man had ever seen him without and from which he got his name was firmly and squarely set above soot-ringed eyes that were permanently round and staring. Ample overalls, much soiled, concealed in their engulfing folds the long, slack-jointed legs. A dirty red bandanna was wrapped about the base of his thin and leathery neck in which a prominent Adam's apple had a most disconcerting habit of bobbing up and down.

Bowler raised his eyes from the yellow piece of paper on which he had been so laboriously scrawling with the stub of a blunt pencil, looked through the

gray patch of window, gazed briefly on the lines of a great, long-barreled locomotive.

A crooked smile of scorn on his wide mouth, a slight upward jerk of his head, and he turned about to spit upon the roundhouse stove with a gesture of vast contempt. Bowler had just come in from the main line with Engine No. 3104, and now he took his work report and shuffled into the office of the roundhouse foreman. Bowler was ready to meet anything that might be said.

The roundhouse foreman was absent, but a gentleman with a florid face, a shock of red hair and a bad disposition was sitting at the desk. His name was Key and his title was road foreman of engines, the immediately superior officer in charge of locomotive engineers. Mr. Key turned smoldering eyes up to meet Mr. Grant, jerked a black cigar from his teeth.

Mr. Key spat, "So! You finally got here, did you?"

Mr. Grant, one of the forty-odd thousand mentioned by Mr. Leffingwell within the hour, placed a large, knotted hand over several square inches of wall space and gave it some of his weight while he leisurely crossed one big foot over the other. He replied, "I ain't no ghost you're lookin' at." Whereupon he tossed in front of the road foreman of engines the scribbled paper. "An' here," he said, "is a expert diagnosis of all the ailments concernin' that high-priced piece of rollin' junk I brought in with me." Mr. Grant, as Mr. Key knew, was referring to Engine No. 3104.

Mr. Key took one look. Only the grimy ceiling kept his red head from going right on up to the gray Montana sky. He saw such entries as "left-hand crosshead guide out of line," "repack right-hand cylinder," "repair four leaking staybolts in throat sheet,"

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"clean out worm gear on stoker and get steam shaker bars to working." He didn't take time to read the rest. He sprang to his feet and grabbed the flat-crowned felt hat from the back of his mop. He threw the hat on the floor and raised both fists high.

"An' you got the nerve to call yourself an engineer!" Road Foreman Key exploded.

"If I wasn't a engineer," Bowler replied wearily, "you'd be sendin' out a crew to pick up the various pieces of that thing you call a nice big engine, an' bring 'em into town to put 'em together again." Bowler spat at the foreman's stove, heard the sizzle and the hiss of steam, but he never took his eyes from Mr. Key.

"Bowler," Mr. Key bellowed, "you oughtta be taken outta service. Here you start outta Harbison at eight last night with that engine in good shape an' only a hunnerd empty cars on your tail. You come in here fourteen hours later—ten o'clock this mornin'—an' all you got left of the 3104 in good workin' order is the bell."

"I ain't sure about the bell," Bowler returned. "I didn't use it none."

Mr. Key strode viciously around the desk and confronted his engineer.

"Oh, you didn't use the bell! Say! Whatta you think the superintendent'll say when he hears about this engine?"

"He'll probably get tongue-tied," Bowler said. "But wait a minute before you go shootin' off your mouth about somethin' you don't know about. I been runnin' engines on this railroad seventeen years. I ain't takin' off my derby to nobody. If we gotta get a engine over the road, I'll get it over. But I'm tellin'

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you, Mr. Key, that I could take a yard engine an' make it show up that 3104 like——"

"Bowler," Road Foreman Key broke in, with a bang of his fat fist on the scarred desk top, "you oughtta be on a yard engine. Permanent. Any mainline man that'd bring a fine big engine in here like you just brought that one—he oughtta be disqualified."

Bowler took his big hand from the wall, rubbed both palms together in a sliding motion. He looked at his hands a moment, then said, "Maybe I ought. But that's somethin' you ain't got the authority to do. My responsibility's to run engines. Them engines has gotta be delivered to me in good shape. You can shoot off your face all you want, but that 3104, an' the other three we got just like it, looks purty, but it ain't worth a whoop. Now, Mr. Road Foreman, you get hold of the roundhouse foreman an' you two nut splitters put your heads together. You make all them repairs I got listed an' maybe I can get the damn thing back to Harbison when you call me out again."

Bowler very quietly swung on his heel and slouched out of the room, to leave Mr. Key talking to himself. Bowler's whole bearing was that of a man who knew his business, and most anybody on the Montana Division could tell you that when Bowler Grant sat at a throttle, the unorthodox derby notwithstanding, the engine in his charge was going to come in for a full round of effort and it was going somewhere.

Take a guy like Key, Bowler thought. What'd he know about these big jacks? Key! An ex-roundhouse machinist. Why, Key had never run an engine further than a turntable pit in all his thirty-two years of life. Bowler spat viciously at a tie as he crossed the en-

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gine yard. He'd just like to give Mr. Key a little taste of hot main-line service, that's what he'd like to do.

As Bowler stretched himself, an hour later, on his cot for rest, his wish was very much in the making. Mr. Key was sitting on the receiving end of a long-distance telephone call. Division Superintendent Mayhew was doing the talking. He was informing Mr. Key that a trainload of Oregon apples was, at the moment, moving eastward out of Spokane and that it would be delivered to the Montana Division at about two A.M. Mr. Mayhew decreed that a 3100-class engine be made ready.

It was on Mr. Key's tongue to say that the only engine of that class possibly available was the 3104, which was nothing short of a total wreck as the result of Mr. Bowler Grant's terrific mauling on the westward trip. Mr. Key, however, knew how vituperative Mr. Mayhew could wax, and decided to let well enough alone. He promised Mr. Mayhew that Engine No. 3104 would be ready.

And while Bowler courted sleep, Road Foreman Key and the roundhouse foreman and two overworked machinists were starting in to cure up the visible ailments of the pride of the high officials' hearts. Mr. Key also made up his mind that, since the apples were as important as Mr. Mayhew had said, he personally was going to ride with Mr. Grant and see that the train got somewhere all in one piece.

Bowler was a much surprised hoghead in the dark hours of the following morning when, at the roundhouse office, he saw Road Foreman Key all decked out in clean overalls, cap and goggles. Bowler looked at the road foreman and hunched his thin shoulders a little more. He signed the register, loaded on the engine with Butch Heim, his fireman, and presently

backed onto his train. He hadn't taken the trouble to ask what manner of drag he was to pull. He sauntered over to the telegraph room in the yard office.

"Yuh think yuh can do it?" Conductor Augustus Hubbard, standing by the telegraph table at Bowler's entry, asked with ill-concealed excitement.

"What?" Bowler demanded. Augustus gave him a green tissue copy of his running orders. Bowler scanned the round scrawl. He frowned and looked closer to make sure that his eyes were reading right.

"What is this?" he asked stoutly. "Somebody gone nuts? Five hours to make Harbison! What've I got? The president's special?"

"We got apples," Augustus piped up. "Oregon apples. Forty cars."

"Somebody sure's in a hurry for apples," Bowler snorted. His Adam's apple bobbed up and down in his skinny neck. He read the order again. Then, "Well, five hours the man says. Five hours she is. Only I wish to hell I had another engine."

"Another engine, eh?" Road Foreman Key shouldered his way up to Bowler. "Don't get that line out for an alibi. We been workin' on that engine since noon yesterday. That engine ain't gonna keep you from gettin' them apples there."

Bowler stared for a moment at the florid face. He smiled grimly and shook his lean head negatively. "It ain't gonna keep me from it if I can help it," Bowler said, and walked from the room.

Bowler couldn't, for the life of him, understand why any apples in the world should be treated like some precious money cargo, or something like that, but he did get a glimmering of what it was all about as he walked around the running gear of Engine 3104 with the florid Mr. Key at the back of his neck.

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Mr. Key spouted, "It's new business! It's a test. Seventy-two hours from Spokane to St. Paul. Everybody from the president down's got his eye on this train. Everybody." Mr. Key was flourishing a thick arm for emphasis.

Mr. Grant said, "Yeah?" and went calmly about, poking the nose of the long-spouted oil can into some convenient hole.

Mr. Key shot, "Yeah! An' you better make sure right now that everything on this engine's in good order. You ain't gonna get out on the road an' have a comeback on me."

Mr. Grant retorted quietly, "I been runnin' engines for seventeen years. If I hadn't already looked this brute over it wouldn't be tied to the train." Whereupon he spat copiously and walked to the other side, his features grim and set in the flickering glare of his hand torch.

"I'm just tellin' yuh," Mr. Key barked officiously. "Five hours to make a hunnerd an' fifty miles. They just can't nothin' go wrong."

Mr. Grant stopped abruptly, oil can poised. He turned his head slightly to face Mr. Key. He twisted his wide lips into a pitying smile. He said:

"As long as we got engines an' train dispatchers an' two streaks of rust to roll over, anything can go wrong. Any time!"

Mr. Key stalked toward the cab talking to himself; and Mr. Grant, finishing his oiling, presently climbed to his high seat on the right-hand side. He bit off a fresh chew, squinted at lubricator and divers gauges, then turned his eyes rearward. He saw numerous lights alongside the dim lengths of the train. Two other engines, one ten cars behind him and another ten cars ahead of the caboose, were patiently cut in

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and waiting. The signal came finally for the brake test and Bowler swung his brass valve around. Then, far back to the rear, a lantern, raised high and swung in a dozen swift little circles.

Bowler sent a couple of short toots from the brass throat of his whistle. The helper engines blew the signal that they were ready and Bowler's throttle arm came back. A belching bark, a thunderous snort, a rumble through the yards and Mr. Artemus Holloweg's apples were on their way.

Bowler nursed his throttle with the hand of a master, shortened his cut-off for higher gear effort, held the green tissue up to the light. Ahead of him stretched immediately eleven miles of ascending grade reaching a maximum of 2.2 per cent. At the top of it was the roof of the world, the pass across the Continental Divide. The average freight-train time for the stretch was one hour and ten minutes. This green tissue gave him fifty minutes. Bowler folded the flimsy and replaced it in his breast pocket. His wide eyes swept the gauges again.

Mr. Key, who had been walking back and forth across the deck, looking at everything in the cab, being very official and very efficient, now brought up to a halt at Bowler's shoulder blade.

Mr. Key advised, "You better widen on her a little more. Better get all the run you can. We gotta get her over the hump."

Mr. Grant, busy applying a pair of felt-lined and plush-covered tabs to his prominent ears for protection against the zero breath of the night, turned slowly in his seat, looked at Mr. Key and slowly shook his head. Mr. Grant had spent many years wondering why the railroad needed such things as road foremen of engines, and again he was trying to find the answer.

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He finally said, "You better go over on the fireman's side an' sit down."

Mr. Key apparently liked standing where he was. Bowler heard him give some further kindly advice; but Bowler stuck his head into the roaring dark and left Road Foreman Key to listen to himself.

Bowler watched every pile of ties, pole and mile post as the speed dropped off and the engine bit into the harder climb. His lean left hand dangled on the throttle latch, touched it now and then. He lengthened his cut-off to get greater power. His stack was belching sparks to the starless sky, and back in the train the helpers were snorting out their defiance of the relentless hill.

At 2:30, a half hour after the start, he was within three miles of his first objective, the crest of that exacting summit. He brought his head in as insistent fingers prodded his ribs.

Road Foreman Key, watch in hand, was yelling above the roar of the exhaust, "Look! See! I wouldn't be su'prised if this engine was pullin' the helpers along with the train. Walkin' right up! These 3100's! Boy, these big engines'll get 'em there if——"

Butch Heim, the fireman, gave a yelp. Bowler saw him leap to the engine deck and open the fire-box door. Bowler straightened suddenly.

"Yah!" Butch looked up, popeyed. "Now we played hell!"

A peculiar grinding noise filled the cab for a second. Bowler was on his feet. Key was at his side. The three men stood together.

"The stoker!" Butch yelled some more. "The thing's busted."

Bowler didn't need to look a second time. He knew too well that someone had literally thrown a monkey

wrench into the machinery. This type of engine, with a fire box the size of an apartment living room, was stoked mechanically. There was a hopper in the tender and a worm-screw-gear apparatus beneath the engine-cab floor that brought the coal along, and under the fire door there was an opening into the fire box through which the coal was fed. Slag, rocks or pieces of iron in the coal will choke up the worm gear, even tear it apart.

That it was now hopelessly torn Bowler was sure. The grinding noise could have meant nothing else. And, since mechanical stokers keep steam with a light bed of coal under continual feed, the draft was now pulling big holes in the fire, carrying the fire through the stack. The steam gauge was reacting accordingly. The pressure was decidedly dropping.

"Shut 'er off!" Key bawled. "Shut 'er off an' we'll fix it."

"Shut 'er off!" Bowler retorted. "An' stop on this mountain?" Visions of that mad five hours of hurry assailed him. He shouted, "We'll keep goin' till she dies! We gotta fire her by hand!"

Mr. Key looked bewildered, but made a great bluster to cover it. He said, "How can you get enough coal in that big box by hand?"

Bowler proceeded, without further words, to show him. Butch brought out the two scoops that were emergency equipment. Butch poised on his side of the deck. Bowler took the other scoop, and he and Butch fired her double, the scoop heels clanging in perfect unison on the door ring. Finally Bowler straightened and handed his scoop to Key.

"Now, you do it just like you seen me do it!" Bowler howled, with a gleaming fire in his wide eyes. "Just like that!"

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Road Foreman Key demurred. Bowler bellowed, "Five hours, mister! Let's see this engine do it!"

They got the train over the crest at Iceline and, as Bowler brought it to a stop, Key staggered back against the seat box. Bowler grabbed Key by the shoulder. He spat, "All right, mister. We got twenty-six miles downhill. We can make it without no trouble, but you get over in that telegraph office an' you wire for a relief engine to meet us somewhere."

"We can fix this stoker!" Key bawled.

"An' we can keep these apples here till they rot. You better wire."

Mr. Key went to the telegraph office. Bowler and the fireman slugged the grates, opened the blower for forced draft. They slugged her hard to get a heavy bed of coals. Bowler expressed, rather volubly, his opinion of any general superintendent of motive power who would design an engine like this one. But he was determined to get it in, or get those apples in if he had to push 'em by hand. Five hours, the man had said. Five hours she'd be.

They got the helper engines cut out, the air tested, and then they started down. Bowler's watch told him that he'd lost ten minutes. Oh, well, he had a hundred and thirty-eight miles to catch it in. He leaned back on his seat, took a fresh chew, closed his window. Road Foreman Key sat down with the fireman. He apparently was glad to get a chance to rest.

The time-card regulations said that freight trains must drop down to White Cloud at no greater speed than three minutes to each mile. Bowler dropped the apples down at less than two minutes to the mile. Twice Mr. Key got from his seat and bawled some word of warning. Twice Mr. Grant gave him a dirty look and turned his eyes to the curving track.

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At White Cloud a cryptic message awaited Mr. Grant and his crew. The message said that no relief engine was available. "Come in with what you have," was the order.

"I can fix this stoker in ten minutes," Key loudly protested as the apples stood at the water tank, five minutes to the good.

"That stoker," Bowler returned, "ain't ever gonna be fixed as far as I'm concerned." He spat into the coal pile and glared. He turned to Key and bawled, "Them pinheads at Harbison says come in with what we got. We maybe might go in with the whistle cord, but in we go!"

"Grant," Key shouted, "I'm the road foreman of engines! I'm orderin' you to wait till I fix this stoker!"

"Yeh," Bowler said, "an' I'm the engineer, an' I got orders, an' we're headin' for town."

Immediately he tooted his whistle lustily, jerked open his throttle and stuck his head through the window. Mr. Key glared mightily, but it got him nowhere.

Bowler said a little, silent prayer and hoped the fireman wouldn't break his thick back. An engine like that was never intended to be a hand bomber, as the hand-stoked engines are called. Butch sailed into the job without a grumble and the apples went shooting along like a rocket over an easy water grade where the tangents permitted a wide-open throttle. Bowler waited until he had her set at a mile-a-minute pace. Then he got down and helped Butch with the coal.

Key sulked and glared and kept off to himself, but presently Bowler was handing him the scoop and inviting him, in rasping bark, to exercise his back. Key took the implement of torture with a sharp crack

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about fixing that stoker at Casco or tying up the railroad.

They almost tied it up before they got to Casco. Bowler's handling wasn't the most merciful in the world, and on the long, straight stretch between Willow Forks and Three Rivers, the pressure began to drop. Bowler sensed it in the feel of the engine even before he brought his head in and squinted at the gauge. He eased off his throttle and took a look at the fire box.

What he saw wasn't cheerful. The fireman was struggling with a shaker bar, but the grates wouldn't shake. The engine, not desiged for heavy slugging, had succeeded in massing a clinker over the bed. Bowler got Key and they tried another shaker. The grates were locked solidly. The two hundred and fifty pounds of steam had dropped off to a hundred and ninety-five.

"The sooner you get it under your skull to stop an' fix this stoker," Key shouted, "the sooner I'm gonna get you to town."

"We're gonna stop when we have to," Bowler retorted, "but we ain't gonna fool none with the stoker."

They stopped on the main line almost within sight of the lights of Casco. They halted with a hundred pounds even, with a fireman caved in at the knees and a howling, sweating, raving maniac for a road foreman of engines.

"There ain't two men in the world can keep this engine hot by hand!" Key bawled. "Look at it! Clinkers!"

"Quit howlin' an' get to work," Bowler retorted. He tackled the grates with a slice bar. He heaved and hauled and cursed. He broke up the clinker mass. He hooked the clinkers out in pieces and threw them over-

board. Conductor Augustus Hubbard came over to see what was up. He crawled up on Bowler's seat and looked on with a pitying grin,

"Twenty minutes," Key bellowed as they got started again with a new fire under forced draft. "I could fix that stoker in twenty minutes. Now look at you! Twenty minutes we lost! Twenty—"

Bowler's head was again out the window, the breeze at zero howling around his hard hat. Twenty minutes on this schedule was nothing to pass over lightly. It was 4:35. Fifty miles to go. One tough mountain to climb. A little more than two hours. Butch was all in.

Over the coal chutes to the right, as he drifted down past the station, an orange glow flared up against the black sky. Bowler saw it from the corner of his eye. He saw it and jerked suddenly erect. That would be the old 1291, a thundering consolidation-type engine now consigned to local freight. It would have a full head of steam, or nearly so. It wouldn't be so pretty to look at, but—

Bowler's mind was made up as he brought the apples to a halt. The pinheads at Harbison, the division's central terminal, wouldn't give him a relief engine. All right. He'd help himself. Mr. Key might object, but let him. The old 1291. Fifty miles an hour would shake it to pieces, but it might hold out for fifty miles, at that.

"Gus," Bowler said to his conductor, "you go over to the telegraph office an' you tell that dispatcher to give us new orders. We're switchin' engine numbers here."

"What's that? What's that?" Mr. Key was on his wabbling feet.

"The local freight's engine," Bowler explained pa-

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tiently. "Engine 1291. That's gonna be us from here on. At least we can keep up steam."

"You can't do anything like that, Grant," Key howled.

"The hell I can't," Bowler retorted calmly. "You come along. You'll see me do it."

"Grant," from Key, with vicious accent, "I'm ordering you now, as road foreman of engines, to stop right here. We're gonna fix this stoker or we're gonna die tryin'."

"Maybe you're gonna fix it," Bowler said slowly, "but these here apples won't be standin' behind it while you do. . . . G'wan Gus! You get them orders changed. I'll get us a new hog."

Key threw his hat on the ground and jumped up and down on it. He yelled, "All right, Grant! But you remember! You're gonna hear about this!"

"I been hearin' about what a rotten engineer I am for seventeen year, from guys like you." Bowler dropped to the gravel. He cut off the air hose, raised the coupling lever. He got back to the cab and moved the engine forward. Key jerked him roughly by the shoulder.

Bowler stood up and said, "I'd hate to have to take you in town with your face busted, but you try any monkeyshines on a runnin' engine with me, an' I'll let you have it." Very calm and very quiet, but decidedly emphatic. Bowler knew just how far he could go. He was an engineer to the bone. He knew his rights and he'd like to see any top sergeant of a road foreman trying to horn in out of that road foreman's jurisdiction.

The hostler, who was grooming the 1291 for a 6:30 call on local, put up an awful squawk.

Bowler stuck his lean visage in the hostler's face

and said, "What you kickin' about? Ain't I givin' you the 3104? One of them nice, big, new engines? All you gotta do is get a nut splitter an' spend the next two hours tryin' to get the stoker to workin'."

"An' then," the hostler growled, "after that all I'll have to do is spend the next two months writin' letters to officials about why the hell I did it."

"Oh, no, you won't," Road Foreman Key thundered. "This lean drink of water that calls himself a engineer—Mr. Grant—he's the guy that'll be writin'."

The swap was accomplished forthright. The 1291 was hooked onto the apples and Gus Hubbard came over from the telegraph office.

Gus piped, "The dispatcher ain't gonna change our orders. He says he ain't got the authority until he calls the super on the phone. I said—"

Bowler didn't wait to hear any more. He loped over to the telegraph office and strode to the desk. Gus came panting behind him. Key loomed large in the door.

"Lemme talk to that guy," Bowler said, and took the receivers on the operator's telephone and placed them to his ears, the plush-covered tabs notwithstanding.

Bowler spat into the phone, "Engineer Grant talkin'. You change them orders or we're leavin' here without 'em."

From Harbison, fifty miles to the east, the voice replied, "Yeah? And just how you gonna do that?"

"Here's how," Bowler said calmly. "I'm gonna take a crowbar an' bust the headlight casin' off the 3104. Then I'll hang it on the 1291's headlight, an' that'll make the number 3104 shine through. That's all I gotta do. You better give us orders."

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The dispatcher gave the necessary change at once. He probably figured this way: What can you do with a train crew like that?

The apples got out of Casco at 4:58.

The 1291 was an old-timer with fifty-inch drivers, four to each side, and a single pair of truck wheels under the cylinders, but it was a free steamer. Butch Heim tackled the scoop with a new energy and had the old kettle singing as Bowler pulled the throttle out to the last notch and let her go. Butch, of course, had to be a cross between a contortionist, an acrobat and a cocklebur to be able to keep both feet on the deck while he swung his scoop. The old 1291 wasn't blessed with any too good springs, and Bowler, on the right-hand cushion, was off the seat as much as he was on. Road Foreman Key held down the seat on the fireman's side and looked like he was thinking up a lot of bitter things to write down in his report to the super on Mr. Grant's sheer mutiny.

Mutiny, or not, those apples stepped through the dew. Bowler was beating that ancient engine on the back and the apples were whipping along on his tail. A couple of the tender wheels were flat and made one awful racket. The throttle bar vibrated like the brake lever of a Model T in low gear, and by the time Bowler had put twenty miles behind him in thirty minutes, he was beginning to wonder whether the 1291 would hold together without the use of bailing wire.

The distant signal at Skygate flashed into view, the green light beckoning him on. Bowler at the same moment began to weigh his chances of ever getting up the mountain beyond to the tunnel. The 3104, in good order, could have made it without a tremor. The 1291 was a horse on a different set of drivers. In the old days, when the 1200-class engines hauled

the main-line freight, Skygate had been a helper town. Now there was nothing there but a dilapidated yard engine that served the branch yards twenty-four hours a day.

Mr. Key came over to Bowler's shoulder with a query. "How you gonna get up the hill?" he asked. "You ain't got a 3100 to—"

Bowler heaved a sigh. He replied, "You sit tight an' hold your hat. I'll show you how."

Ordinarily, Bowler would have taken water at Skygate. He pulled away down beyond the tank, however, and spotted the yard engine on the branch lead. Without saying anything to Mr. Key, Bowler dropped to the gravel and chased over to the yard goat's cab.

Bowler was making a hurried dicker with the crew when Key puffed up behind him.

Key bellowed, "You don't mean to say you're intending to get this thing as a helper up the hill!"

"I ain't doin' nothin' else," Bowler returned.

He swung on the gangway steps. Already the yard engine was moving out.

"Grant"—Key was running alongside and yelling—"you can't do that. This crew's a yard crew. These men—they ain't qualified on the main line. You can't—"

"I ain't worryin' about that part of it!" Bowler yelled back above the clank and pound of the engine. "I'm goin' over the hill!"

Gus Hubbard cut the yard engine into the train about five cars ahead of the caboose. The air brakes were tested, the brake valve in the yard engine's cab was cut out according to operating practice, and Bowler Grant left Skygate like a shot from a cannon.

"You think maybe you're gettin' away with somethin'," Key snarled. "We'll, there's gonna be a big

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party when we get in. Right in the super's office. A big party, Grant, an' you're gonna be the honor guest. Yeh, you are!"

For answer, Bowler spat into the coal pile and proceeded to give the 1291 her head. The old scrap heap responded with a will, creaking in every joint, turning over her short drivers in a blur of rods and cross-heads.

Right up that eight miles of climb to the west portal of the tunnel the old 1291 thundered her valiant way. But she was like an old woman with a bad heart trying to show how spry she could be on the ascent of a steep flight of stairs.

She was almost over the hill when the strain on her vitals proved a lot too much. Bowler had her throttle lever hanging back over the coal gate and her gear adjustment down in the forward corner.

He was putting her to the last ounce of effort when she quit. She quit with a noise that every engineman knows—a vast commotion up in the forward end of her boiler that has no equal, unless it might be a thousand Model T's churning through mud in low gear all at once.

The petticoat pipe had been blasted loose from its moorings under the awful belch of the exhaust. The petticoat pipe is something like an inverted funnel that hangs down inside the boiler from the bottom of the smokestack. It serves as a bell through which the exhaust steam and smoke pour. When it comes down the steam comes down, and there's no way in the world to fix it except by opening the front end of the boiler—the smoke-box door—and taking a chance on asphyxiation.

"Now, there y'are," Road Foreman Key gloated as the useless 1291 was shoved over the summit by the

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last feeble efforts of the yard engine to the rear. "There y'are. If you'd let me stop long enough to fix that stoker back there——"

Bowler didn't have time to listen to Mr. Key. He dropped from his cab as soon as the train came to a halt. He went to the rear and explained matters to Augustus Hubbard. He suggested that the yard engine was the last recourse.

Mr. Hubbard agreed, and the yard engine was cut out of the train, brought up through the siding and thence to the head end.

Mr. Key looked on with a leer. Mr. Grant, after a few minutes of switching, got the yard engine in behind the 1291. That's where it would have to run, because the orders Bowler was traveling on couldn't change engine numbers again.

Bowler transferred the yard-engine crew to the cab of the dead consolidated, got Butch and his scoop up to the old goat's deck, and started down the mountain with thirty minutes left of his five hours, and fourteen miles to go. A played-out jack ahead of him, forty cars of precious eatin' apples to the rear, and a flatwheeled piece of junk beneath his feet.

Bowler leaned back on his seat, took a fresh chew, propped his feet up on the brake-valve handle and held his watch in his hand. Nor did he move from this position until, through his window far around the sweep of a right-hand curve, he could see the yard-limit signal at Harbison, the yellow eye and the whistle post that would mark the end of the run.

As he rocked and swayed under the signal he leaned forward enough to jerk his whistle cord and announce to all and sundry that Mr. Holloweg's Oregon apples were running on the card.

The long, wildcat wail of the station blow broke over

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the outskirts of the waking city. It was 6:45 A.M. and gray daylight was just filling the murky valley, far down between the towering mountain walls.

Bowler's hand stayed on the whistle cord a little overlong. When he released it he sat suddenly erect. The whistle kept on blowing. Bowler tugged at the cord. Mr. Key, from the fireman's seat, shot him a malevolent stare. Bowler tugged again. Nothing happened. The whistle was stuck wide open.

Bowler sat back and relaxed. Let her stick. Maybe it was only the yard engine showing off, howling out the fact that she was finishing a job that a 3100 class had started—one of those nice big engines.

The superintendent met the apples. He was a gruff man, and bulky, but he had kindly eyes. He nodded cheerily to Bowler and Butch. He patted Key on the back. He said, "Great work, Key. That's gettin' 'em over the road. You had to do some thinkin' in the pinches, judging from the telegraph reports I get from along the line, but them apples—you got 'em here, an' that's the main thing."

Bowler took his tin grip and shuffled off to the roundhouse with Butch Heim, weary and sagging, in his wake. Bowler said to Butch, "Five hours, the man said. Five hours she was. Butch, someday somebody's gonna find out what the hell we got road foremen of engines for."

There was warmth in Mr. Artemus Holloweg's pale eyes. He looked up at Mr. Elston Leffingwell. Before him was a little photograph of Engine No. 3104. Mr. Holloweg said, "You hit it right, young man. These time reports you showed me. Five hours over your Montana Division. Your big engines—they must be something to blow about, all right."

"Those big engines," Mr. Leffingwell said. "Those

and one other thing. Something that money can't buy. Morale, Mr. Holloweg. High employe morale, with the whole forty thousand working for us and for you as one man. That's our railroad, Mr. Holloweg. And thanks for the order. These other trains will move just as well."

Flagman Thiel

BY GERHART HAUPTMANN

Few German writers in recent times have been so exalted and honored as Gerhart Johann Hauptmann. A dramatist and novelist, during his lifetime Hauptmann received the coveted Nobel Prize. The records indicate that, both at the Royal College of Art, which he attended with the idea of becoming a sculptor, and at the University of Jena, Hauptmann was a singularly undistinguished student. Failing at sculpture, Hauptmann turned to the theatre where he again failed, this time as an actor. Shortly after his poem "Promithedenlas" was published, Hauptmann decided that he was no poet, and withdrew all copies of his book from sale. However, while he had failed in the theatre as an actor, he finally succeeded as a playwright, scoring a great hit with his drama, "The Weavers," which dealt with labor problems of the 1840's. This success was followed by "The Rats," "The Sunken Bell," "Beaver Coat," "Lonely Lives," and many others. His novels achieved similar international success; many of them, such as Atlantis, Phanton, and the Island of the Great Mother, have been translated into many languages and are widely read today. While his early life was a succession of failures, his later days were marked by a series of honors, including the Nobel Prize for Literature and the organization of the famous Gerhart Hauptmann prize for literature which holds in Germany a place similar to that held by Pulitzer prize in the United States. Oxford, Columbia, Leipzig, and Prague all awarded him honorary degrees. Through the years a cult of Hauptmann followers grew up to raise his prestige so high that, although members of the Nazi party criticised his work, he escaped almost entirely any punitive action. "Flagman Thiel," a great railroad story, is also considered one of the finest of Hauptmann's shorter works.

EVERY Sunday Thiel, the flagman, was to be seen sitting in a pew in the church at Neu Zittau. If he was absent, you might be sure he was on Sunday duty or else—as happened twice in the course of ten years—at home ill in bed. Once a great lump of coal from the tender of a passing locomotive had struck his leg and sent him rolling into the ditch at the bottom of the embankment. The second time the trouble was a wine bottle that had come flying from an express and had hit him in the middle of his chest. Nothing but these two mishaps had ever succeeded in keeping Thiel from church the instant he was off duty.

The first five years he had had to come alone to Neu Zittau from Schön-Schornstein, a small collection of homes on the Spree. Then, one fine day, he appeared in the company of a delicate, sickly looking woman. The people thought she ill suited his herculean build. And on a later Sunday afternoon, at the altar of the church, he solemnly gave her his hand and pledged his troth.

So, for two years, the delicate young creature sat beside him in the pew. For two years her fine, hollow-cheeked face bent over the ancient hymnal beside his weather-tanned face.

And suddenly the flagman was to be seen sitting alone, as of old.

On one of the preceding weekdays the bell had tolled for the dead. That was all.

Scarcely any change, so the people declared, was to be observed in the flagman. The brass buttons of his clean Sunday uniform were as brightly polished as before, his red hair as sleekly pomaded and as neatly parted, military fashion. Only he held his broad, hairy neck a little bent, and sang more eagerly, and listened to the sermon more devoutly. The general opinion was that his wife's death had not hit him very hard. A view

that was strengthened when in the course of the year he married again. The second wife was a strong, stout milkmaid from Altegrund.

Even the pastor felt free to express his doubts when Thiel came to announce his engagement.

"So soon again? You really want to marry so soon again?"

"I can't keep my house running, sir, with the wife who's gone."

"To be sure. But I mean—aren't you in a bit of a hurry?"

"It's on account of the boy."

Thiel's wife had died in childbirth. The boy had lived and been named Tobias.

"Yes, yes, to be sure, the boy," said the pastor, with a gesture clearly revealing that he had not thought of the infant until that moment. "That throws a different light on the matter. What have you been doing with him until now while you are at work?"

Thiel explained that he left Tobias in the care of an old woman. Once she had nearly let him get burned, and another time had let him roll from her lap to the floor. Fortunately the child had not been badly hurt—only a big surface bruise. Such a state of things could not continue, the flagman said, especially as the child, being delicate, required particular attention. For that reason and also because he had sworn to his wife on her death-bed that he would always take exceedingly good care of the child, he had decided to marry again.

The people found absolutely nothing to cavil with in the new couple that now visited the church regularly on Sundays. The milkmaid seemed to have been made for the flagman. She was but a few inches shorter than he and exceeded him in girth, while her features were just as coarsely molded as his, though, in contrast, they lacked soul.

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If Thiel had cherished the desire for an inveterate worker and paragon of a housewife in his second wife, then his hopes were surprisingly fulfilled. However, without knowing it, he had purchased three other qualities, too, a hard, domineering disposition, quarrelsomeness, and brutal passion.

Within half a year the whole place knew who was lord and master in the flagman's little house. Thiel became the object of general pity. It was a piece of good luck for the "creature," the exercised husbands said, that she had got such a gentle lamb as Thiel for a husband. With other men she wouldn't come off so easy, she'd receive some hard knocks. An animal like that had to be managed—with blows, if need be—a good sound thrashing to make her behave herself.

But Thiel, despite his sinewy arms, was not the man to thrash his wife. What got the people so annoyed seemed to cause him no perturbation. As a rule, he let his wife's endless sermonizings pass without a word, and when he did occasionally make a response, the slow drag of his speech and the quiet coolness of his tone contrasted oddly with her high-pitched bawling.

The outside world seemed scarcely to touch him. It was as though he carried something within him that heavily overbalanced all of the evil it brought by good.

Nevertheless, for all his phlegm, there were occasions on which he would not allow things to pass—when little Toby was concerned. Then his childlike goodness, his yieldingness took on a dash of determination that even so untamed a temperament as Lena's did not dare to oppose.

The moments, however, in which he revealed this side of his character became rarer and rarer, and finally ceased completely. During the first year of his marriage he had shown a certain suffering resistance to Lena's tyranny. In the second year this also ceased

completely. After a quarrel he no longer left for his work with his earlier indifference in case he had not previously placated her. Often he even stooped to beg her to be kind again. His solitary post in the heart of the Brandenburg pine forest was no longer, as it had been, the place where he would rather be than anywhere else on earth. The quiet devout thoughts of his dead wife were crossed by thoughts of the living wife. It was not with repugnance, as in the first months of his marriage, that he trod the homeward way, but often with passionate haste, after having counted the hours and minutes till the time of his release.

He who had been united to his first wife by a more spiritual love fell into his second wife's grip through the power of crude impulses. He became almost wholly dependent upon her.

At times he experienced pangs of conscience at this turn, and resorted to a number of unusual devices to bring about a change. For one thing, he declared his hut and his beat to be holy ground, dedicated exclusively to the shades of the dead. And he actually succeeded by all sorts of pretexts in preventing Lena from accompanying him there. He hoped he should always be able to keep her off. The very number of his hut and the direction in which it lay were still unknown to her.

Thus, by conscientiously dividing the time at his disposal between the living and the dead, Thiel actually succeeded in soothing his conscience.

Often, to be sure, especially in moments of solitary devotion, when he felt the tie between him and his dead wife deeply and warmly, he beheld his present condition in the light of truth, and he experienced disgust.

If he was doing day duty, his spiritual intercourse with her was limited to dear recollections of their life together. But in the dark, when a snowstorm raged among the pines and along the embankment, his hut at

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midnight, by the light of his lantern, became a chapel.

With a faded photograph of the departed before him on the table, and the hymnal and the Bible turned open, he alternately read and sang the whole night long, interrupted only at intervals by the trains rushing past. He would attain a state of ecstasy in which he had visions of his wife standing there in person.

In its remoteness this post, which Thiel had held for ten years, contributed to the intensification of his mystic inclinations. To the north, east, south and west, it was separated by a walk of at least three-quarters of an hour from the nearest habitation. It lay in the very heart of the forest. But there was a grade crossing there, and Thiel's duty was to lower and raise the gates.

In the summer days passed, in the winter weeks without a single person except other railroad workers setting foot on Thiel's beat. Almost the only changes in the solitude came from the weather and the periodic mutations of the seasons. It was not difficult to recall the events—besides the two mishaps to his body—that had broken into the regular course of the hours of service.

Four years previous the imperial special bearing the Kaiser to Breslau had gone dashing by. Once on a winter's night an express had run over a stag. And once on a hot summer's day, as Thiel was making an inspection of his beat, he had found a corked bottle of wine. It was scorching hot to the touch, and Thiel had esteemed its contents because when he uncorked it a geyser spouted out, showing that the stuff was well fermented. Thiel had laid the bottle on the edge of a pond in the woods to cool off. Somehow it had disappeared from the spot, and even after the passage of years Thiel never thought of that bottle without a pang of regret.

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A bit of diversion was provided by a spring behind the hut. From time to time men at work on the road bed or on the telegraph lines came for a drink, and stayed, of course, to talk a while. Sometimes the forest ranger would also come when he was thirsty.

Tobias developed slowly. It was not until he was two years old that he learned to walk and talk. For his father he displayed unusual affection, and as he grew more understanding Thiel's old love for his child was re-awakened. Accordingly Lena's love for the child decreased, turning into unmistakable dislike when the next year a baby boy was born to her, too.

After that bad times began for Tobias. In his father's absence he was particularly made to suffer. He had to dedicate his feeble powers unrewarded to the service of the little cry-baby. He became more and more exhausted. His head grew too large round, and his fiery red hair, with the chalky face beneath, on top of his wretched little body, made an unlovely and pitiful impression. When the backward mite was seen dragging himself down to the Spree with his baby brother bursting with health in his arms, curses were muttered behind the windows of the cottages. But no one ever ventured to utter the curses in the open.

Thiel, who was most of all concerned, seemed to have no eyes for what was going on, and refused to understand the hints of well-meaning neighbors.

II

Once Thiel returned from night duty at seven o'clock of a June morning. Directly Lena had greeted him, she burst into her usual complaining.

A few weeks before notice had been given that they

could no longer cultivate the piece of land which they rented for planting potatoes for their own use, and no other land had been found to replace it. Though everything pertaining to the land was part of Lena's duty, Thiel none the less had to listen to a hundred iterations that he would be to blame if they had to buy ten sacks of potatoes for dear money. Thiel merely muttered a word or two. Paying slight attention to Lena's tirade, he went straight over to Tobias's bed, which he shared with the boy on nights when he was off duty.

He sat down and watched the sleeping child with an anxious expression on his good face. For a while he contented himself with chasing away the persistent flies, then he woke him up. A touching joy lighted up the boy's blue, deep-set eyes. He snatched for his father's hand, and a pitiful smile drew the corners of his mouth. Thiel helped him put on his few bits of clothing. Suddenly a shadow chased across his face. He noticed that his son's right cheek was slightly swollen and bore finger marks designed white on red.

At breakfast Lena brought up the same subject again, pursuing it with even more vigor. Thiel cut her off by telling her that the railroad inspector had given him for nothing the use of a stretch of land alongside the tracks not far from his hut, probably because it was too distant for the inspector to use for himself.

Lena was incredulous, then gradually her doubts melted away and she became noticeably good-humored. How big was the lot? How good was the soil? She plied him with questions. And when she learned that there were actually two dwarf fruit trees on the land, she fairly lost her head. At length the questions were all asked, and as the shopkeeper's bell, which could be heard in every house in the place, kept ringing incessantly, Lena ran forth to ferret out the latest news.

While she remained in the dark shop crowded with

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wares, Thiel occupied himself at home with Tobias, who sat on his knee playing with pine cones that his father had brought from the woods.

"What do you want to be when you grow up?" asked Thiel. The stereotyped question was invariably answered by the equally stereotyped reply, "Railroad inspector." It was not asked in fun. The flagman's dreams actually soared so high. It was in all seriousness that he cherished the hope that with God's help Tobias would become something extraordinary. The instant "railroad inspector" left the child's bloodless lips, Thiel's face brightened, fairly radiated bliss.

"Go play now, Tobias," he said soon afterward, lighting his pipe with a shaving kindled at the hearth fire. The boy showing shy pleasure went out.

Thiel undressed and got into bed. For a long while he lay staring up at the low, cracked ceiling. Finally he fell asleep and woke up shortly before twelve o'clock. While Lena in her noisy fashion prepared the midday meal, he dressed and went out on the street to fetch Tobias, whom he found scratching plaster out of a hole in the wall and stuffing it into his mouth. Thiel led him by the hand past the eight houses that constituted the hamlet down to the Spree. The stream lay dark and glassy between sparsely foliated poplars. Thiel sat down on a block of granite close to the water's edge.

Every fair day the villagers were accustomed to see him on this spot. The children were devoted to him. They called him Father Thiel. He taught them games that he remembered from his own childhood, reserving, however, the best of his memories for Tobias. He whittled him arrows that flew farther than those of the other boys, he carved him willow pipes, and even deigned to sing ditties in his rusty bass, and tap the beat with the horn handle of his knife against the bark of a tree.

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The people thought him silly. They blamed him. They could not understand how he could go to so much trouble for the little brats. Though they should have been richly content, seeing that the children were well taken care of when in his charge. Besides, Thiel did more than play with them. He took up serious things, too. He heard the older ones recite their lessons, helped them study their Bible and hymn verses, and spelled out c-a-t and d-o-g with the younger ones.

After the midday meal Thiel rested again a while, drank a cup of coffee, and began to prepare for work. It took him a lot of time, as for everything he did. Each move had been regulated for years. The objects carefully spread out on the walnut dresser went into his various pockets always in the same order—knife, notebook, comb, a horse's tooth, an old watch in a case, and a small book wrapped in red paper. The last was handled with especial care. During the night it lay under Thiel's pillow, and by day was carried in his breast pocket. On a label pasted on the cover was written in Thiel's awkward yet flourished hand, "Savings Account of Tobias Thiel."

The clock on the wall with the long pendulum and sickly yellow face indicated a quarter to five when Thiel left. A small boat, his own property, ferried him across the Spree. Arrived at the further side, he stood still a moment and listened back in the direction he had come from. Then he turned into a broad path through the woods and within a few moments reached the depths of the deep-booming pine forest, its mass of needles like a dark green undulating sea.

The moist layers of needles and moss made a carpet as inaudible to the tread as felt. Thiel made his way without looking up, now past the rusty brown columns of the older trees, now between the thickly enmeshed younger growth, and farther on across broad stretches

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of nursery, overshadowed by a few tall slim pines for the protection of the young saplings. A transparent bluish haze rising from the earth laden with mingled fragrances blurred the forms of the trees. A heavy, drab sky hung low over the tops. Flocks of cawing crows seemed to bathe in the gray of the atmosphere. Black puddles filled the depressions in the path and cast a still drearier reflection of a dreary nature.

"Fearful weather," thought Thiel when he roused out of deep reflection and looked up.

Suddenly his thoughts were deflected. A dim feeling came to him that he must have forgotten something. And surely enough, when he searched his pockets, he discovered that he had not brought along the sandwich that he required on account of the long hours on duty. For a while he stood undecided. Then turned and hurried back.

In a short while he reached the Spree, rowed himself across in a few powerful strokes, and without delay, perspiring from every pore, ascended the gradual slope of the village street. The shopkeeper's old, mangy poodle lay in the middle of the road. On the tarred board fence around a cottager's yard perched a hooded crow. It spread its feathers, shook itself, nodded, uttered an ear-splitting caw, caw, and with a slapping sound of its wings rose in the air and let the wind drive it in the direction of the forest.

Nothing was to be seen of the villagers—about twenty fishermen and lumbermen with their families.

The stillness was broken—by a high-pitched voice. The flagman involuntarily stopped. A volley of violent, jangling tones assailed his ears. It seemed to come from the open dormer window of a low house that he knew only too well.

Treading as silently as possible, he glided nearer. Now he quite clearly recognized his wife's voice. Only a

few steps more, and he could understand almost everything she said.

"You horrid little beast, you! Is the poor baby to scream its belly inside out from hunger? What? Just you wait—just you wait. I'll teach you to mind. You'll never forget."

For a few moments there was silence. Then a sound could be heard like the beating out of clothes. And the next instant another hailstorm of abuse was let loose.

"You miserable little puppy, you! Do you think I'll let my own child die of hunger because of a mean little thing like you?—Shut your mouth!" A slight whimper had been audible. "If you don't shut your mouth, I'll give you something that'll keep you going a whole week."

The whimpering did not subside.

The flagman felt his heart pounding in irregular beats. He began to tremble slightly. His glance fastened on the ground as though his mind were wandering, and again and again his coarse, hard hand went up to his freckled forehead to brush back a dank strand of hair. For a second he was about to give way. He stood shaken by a convulsion that swelled his muscles and drew his fingers into a clenched ball. The convulsion subsided. He was left in a state of dull exhaustion.

With unsteady steps he entered the narrow, brick-paved vestibule and slowly, wearily mounted the creaking wooden stairs.

"Pugh, pugh, pugh!" You could hear how with every sign of scorn and fury some one spat out three times in succession. "You horrid, mean, sneaking, cowardly, low-down good-for-nothing!" The epithets followed one another in crescendo, the voice that uttered them breaking several times from strain. "You want to hit my boy, do you? You ugly little brat you, don't you dare to hit the poor helpless child on its mouth. What's

that? Huh? If I wanted to soil my hands on you, I'd—"

At that moment the door to the living room was opened, and the rest of the sentence remained unspoken on the frightened woman's tongue. She was livid with passion, her lips twitched evilly. Her right hand raised in the air sank and grasped the saucepan with milk in it. She tried to pour some into the baby's bottle, but desisted as the larger part of the milk flowed down the outside of the bottle on to the table. She clutched at various objects without being able to hold them any length of time. Finally she recovered herself sufficiently to address her husband with violence. What did he mean by coming home at this unusual hour? Was he thinking of spying on her? That would be too much. This last was directly followed by the asseveration that she had a clear conscience and need not lower her eyes before any one.

Thiel scarcely heard what she said. He gave a hasty look at Toby, who was crying aloud, and for a few moments he had to restrain forcibly a something dreadful rising within him. Then the old phlegm spread over his taut features, and at the same time a furtive, lustful light came into his eyes. His glance played over his wife's heavy limbs while she, with averted face, bustled about still making an effort to be composed. Her full, half-bared breasts swelled with excitement and threatened to burst her corset. Her drawn-up skirts accentuated the width of her broad hips. A force seemed to emanate from the woman, indomitable, inescapable. Thiel felt himself powerless to cope with it. Tightly like a cobweb, yet firmly as a mesh of steel, it laid itself around him, chaining him down, robbing him of his strength. In this condition he was incapable of saying a word to her, much less a harsh word.

Thus it was that Tobias, bathed in tears, cowering in a corner, saw his father go over to the oven bench with-

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out looking round at him, pick up the forgotten sandwich, hold it out to Lena by way of the only explanation, give a short, distraught nod of his head in good-by, and disappear.

III

Thiel made all possible haste back to his solitary post in the woods. Even so he was a quarter of an hour late. The assistant who relieved him, a consumptive, the victim of the unavoidably rapid changes in temperature to which the work subjected one, was waiting prepared to leave on the sanded little platform of the hut, on which the number, black on white, gleamed from a distance between the tree trunks.

The two men shook hands, exchanged a few brief reports, and parted, the one disappearing within the hut, the other taking the continuation of the road by which Thiel had come. His convulsive cough sounded further and further away among the trees, until finally the one human sound in the solitude fell silent.

Thiel as always, after his fashion, set about preparing the small square room for the night. He worked mechanically, his mind occupied with the impression of the past hour.

First he laid his supper on the narrow, brown-painted table beside one of the windows like slits through which the stretch of track could be conveniently viewed. Next he kindled a fire in the small, rusty stove and placed a pot of cold water on top. After that he straightened out his utensils, a shovel, a spade, a wrench and a few other things, and then cleaned his lantern and filled it with fresh oil.

Scarcely were his arrangements completed when the

signal rang shrilly, three times, and three times again, to announce that a train from the direction of Breslau was pulling out of the near station. Thiel showed no hurry, allowing a few minutes to pass before emerging from the hut with flag and cartridge case in his hand. And it was with a lazy, dragging shuffle that he walked along the narrow strip of sand to the crossing, about sixty feet away. Though there was scarcely any traffic along the road at that point, still he conscientiously let down and raised the gates before and after the passage of each train.

This operation now concluded, he leaned idly on one of the black-and-white barred anchor-posts.

The tracks cut in a straight line right and left into the green forest stretching beyond the reach of the eye. On each side the mass of needles stood apart to leave, as it were, an avenue free for the reddish-brown graveled embankment. The black tracks running parallel looked like the strands of a huge iron net drawn together at a point on the horizon in the extreme south and north.

The wind had risen, it drove light waves of mist along the edge of the forest into the distance. A humming came from the telegraph poles alongside the tracks. On the wires that stretched from pole to pole like the sustaining cords spun by a huge spider perched swarms of chirping birds. A woodpecker flew with a laugh over Thiel's head. The man did not so much as look up.

The sun hanging from under the edge of vast masses of clouds and about to sink into the dark-green sea of treetops poured streams of purple over the forest. The pillared arcades of the pine trunks on the yon side of the embankment took fire as from within and glowed like metal. The tracks, too, began to glow, turning into the semblance of fiery snakes. They were the first to

pale. The glow, leaving the ground, slowly ascended upward, resigning first the bodies of the trees, then the lower tops to the cold light of dissolution. For a while a reddish sheen lingered on the extreme crowns.

Silently and solemnly was the exalted drama enacted.

The flagman still stood at the gates motionless. At length he made a step forward. A dark point on the horizon where the tracks joined, became more than a point. Increasing from second to second it yet seemed to stand still. Then of a sudden it acquired movement, and drew nearer. A vibrating and humming went through the tracks, a rhythmic clang, a muted thunder. It grew louder and louder until at length it sounded not unlike the hoof beats of a storming cavalry regiment. From a distance the air pulsated intermittently with a panting and a blustering. Then suddenly the serenity of the forest snapped. A mad uproar filled the welkin, the tracks curved, the earth shook—a blast of air, a cloud of dust and steam and smoke—and the snorting monster had gone by.

The noises waned as they had waxed. The exhalations thinned away. Shrunken to a point again the train vanished in the distance, and the old solemn hush again settled upon this corner of the forest.

“Minna,” whispered the flagman, as if coming out of a dream.

He returned to the hut, where he brewed himself some weak coffee, then sat down, sipping from time to time and all the while staring at a dirty piece of newspaper that he had picked up on his round.

Gradually a curious unrest came upon him. Attributing it to the heat from the stove, he tore off his coat and waistcoat. That proving to be of no help, he got up, took

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a spade from a corner, and went out to the lot that the inspector had presented to him.

It was a narrow strip of soil, overgrown with weeds. The blossoms on the two fruit trees were like snowy white foam. Thiel calmed down, a quiet content possessed him.

To work now.

The spade cut into the earth with a crunch. The wet clods flew and crumbled as they fell.

For a long while he dug uninterruptedly. Then he paused and said to himself audibly, shaking his head gravely:

"No, no, it won't do. No, it won't do."

The thought had suddenly struck him that Lena would be coming there often to look after the lot, and his accustomed life would be seriously disturbed. At one blow pleasure in the possession of the bit of ground turned into distaste. Hastily, as if he had been about to do wrong, he ripped the spade out of the earth and carried it back to the hut.

Again he sank into gloomy reflections. Almost without knowing why, he could not endure the prospect of Lena's presence for whole days at a stretch while he was on duty. Much as he might try he could not reconcile himself to the idea. It seemed to him he had something valuable to defend, against some one who was attempting to violate his holiest sanctuary. Involuntarily his muscles tautened in a slight cramp, and a short, defiant laugh escaped him.

The sound of his own laughter was alarming. He looked about and lost the thread of his thoughts. Finding it again he went back to the same dismal broodings.

Then suddenly a heavy black curtain was torn apart, his eyes so long befogged had now a clear view. He had the sensation of awakening from a deathlike sleep that had lasted two years. With an incredulous shake of the

head he contemplated all the awful things he must have been guilty of in that condition. The long-suffering of his child, which the impressions of the earlier afternoon should only have confirmed, now were clearly revealed to his soul. Pity and penitence overcame him, and also great shame, that all this long while he had lived in disgraceful resignation, never taking the dear, helpless child's part, not even finding the strength to admit how much the child suffered.

From the self-tormenting contemplation of his sins of omission a great tiredness came over him. He fell asleep, bent over the table with his forehead resting on his hand.

For a long while he lay like that, and several times uttered the name Minna in a choked voice.

A rushing and roaring filled his ears, as of great masses of water. He tore his eyes open and looked about. Darkness enveloped him. His limbs gave way, the sweat of terror oozed from every pore, his pulse beat irregularly, his face was wet with tears.

He wanted to look toward the door, but in the inky darkness did not know which way to turn. He rose reeling. And still terror possessed him. The woods outside boomed like the ocean, the wind drove rain and sleet against the panes. Thiel groped about helplessly. For a moment he felt himself to be drowning. Then suddenly there was a dazzling bluish flare, as of drops of supernatural light falling down into the earth's atmosphere to be instantly extinguished by it.

The moment sufficed to restore the flagman to reason. He fumbled for his lantern and found it. At the same instant the thunder awoke on the farthest edge of the heavens over Brandenburg. At first a dull, restrained rumble, it rolled nearer in surging metallic waves, until

overhead it discharged itself in great peals, menacing roars that shook the earth to its foundations.

The window panes clattered. Thiel lighted the lantern, and his first glance after he regained self-control was at the clock. In a bare five minutes the express was due. Thinking he had failed to hear the signal, he made for the crossing as quickly as the dark and the storm permitted. Just as he was letting down the gates the signal rang—the sound was scattered by the wind in all directions.

The pine-trees bent over, their branches scraped against each other with uncanny creakings and squeakings. For a few moments the moon was visible, a pale yellow chalice amid the torn clouds. By its light could be seen the wind's mauling of the black treetops. The foliage of the birches along the embankment waved and fluttered like ghostly horses' tails. Beneath them lay the rails gleaming wet, absorbing the pale moonlight in spots here and there.

Thiel tore the cap from his head. The rain soothed him. It ran down his face mingled with tears.

His brain was in a ferment with confused recollections of his dream. Tobias seemed to be undergoing maltreatment, and such horrible maltreatment that the mere thought of it stopped his heart. Another vision was clearer, of his dead wife. She had come from somewhere along the railroad tracks. She had looked very ill and was wearing rags for clothes. Without looking round she passed the hut, and then—here his memory became vague—she had great difficulty somehow in proceeding, she even collapsed several times.

Thiel pondered. And then he knew that she was in flight. No doubt of it. Else why those anxious backward glances as she dragged herself forward with her legs giving way under her? Oh, those awful looks of hers!

But there was something that she was carrying,

wrapped in cloths, something limp, bloody, pale. And the way she looked down on it reminded him of a past scene.

A dying woman who kept her gaze fixed on her newborn babe with an expression of the deepest pain, intolerable torture. It was an expression he could no more forget than that he had a father and a mother.

Where had she gone? He did not know. But one thing was clear in his soul: she had withdrawn from him, disregarded him, dragged herself further and further away into the dark, stormy night. "Minna, Minna," he had cried, and the sound of his own cry awakened him.

Two round red lights like the staring eyes of a huge monster penetrated the dark. A bloody sheen glided in advance, transforming the drops of rain in its course into drops of blood. A veritable rain of blood seemed to descend from heaven.

Horror fell upon Thiel, mounting and mounting as the train drew nearer. Dream and reality fused into one. He still saw the woman wandering down the tracks. His hand wavered toward the cartridge case, as if to stop the speeding train. Fortunately it was too late. Lights flared before his eyes, the train had rushed past.

The remainder of the night there was little peace for Thiel. He felt a great urgency to be at home, a great longing to see little Toby, from whom, it seemed to him, he had been separated for years. Several times, in his growing anxiety over the child's condition he was tempted to quit duty.

To shorten the hours until his release he determined as soon as day dawned to walk his beat. So, with a cane in one hand and a large iron wrench in the other, he went out into the dirty-gray twilight and stepped along on the spine of a rail, halting every now and then to tighten a bolt with the wrench or to hammer at one of the fish-plates that held the rails together.

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The wind and rain had stopped, fragments of a pale blue sky became visible between rifts in the banked clouds. The monotonous tap-tap of his soles on the hard metal and the sleepy drip-drop from the wet trees gradually calmed Thiel.

At six o'clock he was relieved. Without delay he started home.

It was a glorious Sunday morning. The clouds had broken and drifted beyond the horizon. The sun, gleaming like a great blood-red gem, poured veritable masses of light upon the forest. Through the network of the branches the beams shot in sharp straight lines casting a glow upon islets of lacy ferns and here and there turning silvery gray patches on the ground into bits of coral. The tops of the trees, the trunks, the grass shed fire-like dew. The world seemed to lie under a deluge of light. And the freshness of the air penetrated to the very core of one's being.

Even in Thiel's brain the fantasies of the night could not but grow pale. And when he entered the room where little Toby was lying in bed with the sun shining on him and more color in his cheeks than usual, they disappeared completely.

To be sure, in the course of the day Lena thought she noticed something odd about him. At church instead of looking in the book he observed her sidewise, and in the middle of the day, when Toby was supposed as usual to carry the baby out on the street, he took it from the boy's arms and laid it in her lap. Otherwise there was nothing conspicuously different about him.

Having no chance to take a nap and as he was to do day duty that week, he went to bed early, at nine o'clock. Exactly as he was about to fall asleep, his wife told him that she intended to accompany him the next morning to dig the lot and plant potatoes.

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Thiel winced. He awoke completely, but kept his eyes shut.

Lena went on. If the potatoes were to amount to anything, she said, it was high time to do the planting. And she would have to take the children along because it would probably occupy her the entire day.

Thiel muttered a few unintelligible words, to which she paid no attention. She had turned her back and by the light of a tallow candle was occupied with unfastening her corset and letting down her skirts. Suddenly, without herself knowing why, she turned round and beheld her husband's ashen face distorted by a play of passions. He had raised himself partly, supporting himself by his hands on the edge of the bed, his burning eyes fastened upon her.

"Thiel!" cried the woman, half in anger, half in fear.

Like a somnambulist who hears his name called, Thiel came out of his daze. He stammered something, threw his head back on the pillow, and pulled the quilt over his ears.

Lena was the first to get up the next morning. She went about noiselessly, making the necessary preparations for the excursion. The baby was put into the perambulator, then Tobias was awakened and dressed. He smiled when he was told where he was going.

When everything was ready and even the coffee was made and set on the table, Thiel awoke. His first sensation on seeing the arrangements was of displeasure. He wanted to protest, but the proper opening refused to frame itself. Besides, what arguments could he advance that would weigh with Lena? And there was his child's little face beaming with joy, growing happier and happier each instant, until Thiel, from the sight of his delight in the approaching excursion, could not think of opposing it.

Nevertheless, on the way through the woods, as he

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pushed the baby-carriage with difficulty through the deep soil, Thiel was not free from anxiety.

Tobias gathered flowers and laid them in the carriage. He was happier than almost any time his father had seen him. In his little brown plush cap he hopped about among the ferns and tried, helplessly to be sure, to catch the glassy-winged dragon flies that darted above them.

As soon as they reached the spot, Lena made a survey. She threw the sack of seed potatoes on the grassy edge of a small grove of birches, kneeled down, and let the darkish soil run between her fingers.

Thiel watched her eagerly.

"Well," he said, "how is it?"

"Every bit as good as the corner on the Spree."

A burden fell from the flagman. He contentedly scratched the stubble on his face. He had feared she would be dissatisfied.

After hastily devouring a thick slice of bread the woman tossed aside head cloth and jacket, and began to spade up the earth with the speed and endurance of a machine. At regular intervals she straightened up and took several deep breaths. But the pauses were never for long, except when she had to suckle the baby, which she did quickly, with panting, perspiring breasts.

After a while the flagman called to her from the platform in front of the hut:

"I must inspect the beat. I'm taking Tobias with me."

"What!" she screamed back. "Nonsense! Who'll stay with the baby? You'll come here," she shouted still louder.

But the flagman as if not hearing walked off with Toby. For a moment, she considered whether she should not run after the two, then desisted because of the loss of time.

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Thiel walked down the tracks with his son. The boy was quite excited, everything was so new and strange. Those narrow black rails warmed by the sun—he could not comprehend what they could be meant for. And he kept up an incessant stream of funny questions. What struck him as strangest of all was the resonance of the telegraph poles.

Thiel knew the sound of each note on his beat so well that with closed eyes he could tell at exactly what spot he stood. And now he stopped several times, holding Tobias by the hand, to listen to the wonderful tones that came from the wood like sonorous chorals from inside a church. The note at the extreme south end made a particularly full, beautiful sound. It was a mingling of tones that seemed to come without pausing for breath.

Tobias ran round the weathered post to see if he could not through some hole discover the originators of the lovely music. His father listening sank into a devout mood, as in church. He distinguished a voice that reminded him of his dead wife, and fancied it was a choir of blessed spirits, her voice mingling with the others. A deep emotion, a great yearning brought the tears to his eyes.

Tobias asked to be allowed to gather the flowers in the field alongside the tracks. Thiel as always let the child have his way.

Fragments of the blue sky seemed to have dropped on to the meadow, so thickly was it strewn with small, blue blossoms. Like colored pennants the butterflies fluttered and floated among the shining white trunks of the birches. The delicate green foliage gave forth a soft rustle.

Tobias plucked flowers. His father watched him meditatively. Occasionally the flagman raised his eyes and searched between the leaves for a glimpse of the sky,

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which held the golden sunlight like a huge, spotless bowl.

"Father," said the child, pointing to a brown squirrel which with small scratching sounds was darting up a solitary pine-tree, "father, is that the good Lord?"

"Silly boy," was all that Thiel could find to reply as bits of loosened bark fell from the trunk of the tree to his feet.

Lena was still digging when Thiel and Tobias returned. She had already spaded up half the plot!

The trains passed at intervals. Each time they rushed by Tobias watched with mouth agape. Even his step-mother was amused by the funny faces he made.

The midday meal, consisting of potatoes and a remnant of roast pork, was consumed inside the hut. Lena was in good spirits. Even Thiel seemed ready to resign himself to the inevitable with good grace. While they ate, he entertained his wife by telling her various things connected with his work. Could she, for instance, imagine that there were forty-six spikes in one rail, and more like that.

By mealtime the spading had been done, and in the afternoon Lena was going to sow the potatoes. This time, insisting that Tobias must look after the baby, she took him along.

"Watch out!" Thiel called after her, suddenly gripped by concern. "Watch out that he doesn't go too close to the tracks."

A shrug of Lena's shoulders was her only answer.

The signal rang for the Silesian express. Scarcely had Thiel taken his place in readiness at the gates when the approaching rumble became audible. Within a fraction of a minute he could see the train. On it came, the black funnel spitting steam in countless puffs, one chasing upward after the other. There! One—two—

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three milk-white geysers gushing up straight as candles—the engine whistling. Three times in succession, short, shrill, alarming.

“They’re putting on the brakes,” Thiel said to himself. “I wonder why.”

He stepped out beyond the gates to look down the tracks, mechanically pulling the red flag from its case and holding it straight in front of him.

Good heavens! Had he been blind? God, O God, what was that? There—between the rails.

“Stop!” he screamed with every atom of breath in his lungs.

Too late. A dark mass had gone down under the train and was being tossed between the wheels like a rubber ball.

Only a few seconds more and with a grating and squeaking of the brakes, the train came to a standstill.

Instantly the lonely stretch became a scene of animation. The conductor and brakeman ran along the gravel path beside the tracks back to the rear end. From every window curious faces peered. And then the crowd that had gathered in the rear formed into a cluster, and moved forward.

Thiel panted. He had to hold on to something not to sink to the ground like a slaughtered steer.

How’s that? Were they actually waving to him?

“No!”

A scream came from the spot where the accident had occurred, followed by a howling as from an animal. Who was that? Lena? It was not her voice, yet—

A man came hurrying down the tracks.

“Flagman!”

“What’s the matter?”

“An accident.”

The messenger shrank before the strange expression

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in the flagman's eyes. His cap hung on the side of his head, his red hair stood straight up.

"He's still alive. Maybe something can be done."

A rattle in the flagman's throat was the only answer.

"Come quickly—quickly."

With a tremendous effort Thiel pulled himself together. His slack muscles tautened, he drew himself to his full height, his face was empty and dead.

He followed the man at a run, oblivious of the pale, frightened faces at the windows. A young woman looked out, a traveling salesman with a fez on his head, a young couple apparently on their honeymoon. What were they to him? The contents of those rattling, thumping boxes on wheels had never concerned him. His ears were filled with Lena's lamentations.

Yellow dots swam before his eyes, countless yellow dots like fireflies. He shrank back, he stood still. From out of the dance of fireflies it came toward him, pale, limp, bloody—a forehead beaten black and blue, blue lips with dark blood trickling from them. Tobias!

Thiel said nothing. His face went a dirty white. He grinned as if out of his senses. At length he bent over, he felt the limp, dead limbs heavy in his arms. The red flag went round them.

He started to leave.

Where?

"To the railroad doctor, to the railroad doctor," came from all sides.

"We'll take him," called the baggage-master, and turned to prepare a couch of coats and books in his car. "Well?"

Thiel made no move to let go of the boy. They urged him. In vain. The baggage-master had a stretcher handed out from the car and ordered a man to remain with the father. Time was precious. The conductor's whistle shrilled. Coins rained from the windows.

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Lena raved like a madwoman. "The poor woman," they said in the coaches, "the poor, poor mother."

The conductor whistled several times, the engine blew a signal, sent white clouds hissing up from its cylinders, and stretched its sinews of iron. In a few seconds, the mail express, with floating flags of smoke, was dashing with redoubled speed through the forest.

The flagman, whose mood had altered, laid the half-dead child on the stretcher.

There he lay with his racked tiny body. Every now and then a long wheeze raised the bony chest, which was visible under the tattered shirt. The little arms and legs, broken not only at the joints, assumed the most unnatural positions. The heel of one small foot was twisted to the front, the arms hung over the sides of the stretcher.

Lena kept up a continuous whimper. Every trace of her former insolence had disappeared. Over and over again she repeated a story to exonerate herself.

Thiel seemed not to notice her. With an expression of awful anxiety he kept his eyes riveted on the child.

A hush had fallen, a deadly hush. The tracks rested hot and black on the glaring gravel. The noon had stifled the wind, and the forest stood motionless, as if carved in stone.

In muffled voices the two men took counsel. The quickest way to reach Friedrichshaven would be to go back to the neighboring station in the direction of Breslau, because the next train, a fast commutation, did not stop at the station that was nearer to Friedrichshaven.

Thiel seemed to consider if he should go along. At the time there was no one there who understood the duties of the position, so with a mute motion of his head

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he indicated to his wife that she should take hold of the stretcher. She did not dare to refuse though she was concerned about having to leave the baby behind.

Thiel accompanied the cortège of two to the end of his beat, then stood still and looked after them long. Suddenly he clapped his hand to his forehead with a blow that resounded afar. It might wake him up, he thought. Because this was a dream like the one he had had yesterday. No use. Reeling rather than walking he reached his hut. There he fell face downward on the floor. His cap flew into a corner, his carefully kept watch fell from his pocket, the case sprang open, the glass broke. An iron fist seemed to be clamped on his neck, so tight that he could not move no matter how he moaned and groaned and tried to free himself. His forehead was cold, his throat parched.

The ringing of the signal roused him. Under the influence of those three repeated sounds the attack abated. Thiel could rise and do his duty. To be sure, his feet were heavy as lead, and the stretch of rails circled about him like the spokes of an enormous wheel with his head for its axis. But at least he could stand up a while.

The commutation train approached. Tobias must be in it. The nearer it drew the more the pictures before Thiel's eyes blurred. Finally all he saw was the mutilated boy with the bloody mouth. Then darkness fell.

After a while he awoke from the swoon. He found himself lying in the hot sun close to the gates. He rose, shook the sand from his clothes and spat it from his mouth. His head cleared a bit, he could think more quietly.

In the hut he immediately picked his watch up from the floor and laid it on the table. It was still going. For

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two hours he counted the seconds, then the minutes, while representing to himself what was happening to Tobias. Now Lena was arriving with him, now she stood in front of the doctor. The doctor observed the boy and felt him all over, and shook his head.

"Bad, very bad—but perhaps—who can tell?"

He made a more thorough examination.

"No," he then said, "no, it's all over."

"All over, all over," groaned the flagman. But then he drew himself up, raised his unconsciously clenched fist, rolled his eyes to the ceiling, and shouted as if the narrow little room must burst with the sound of his voice. "He must live, he must. I tell you, he must live."

He flung open the door of the hut—the red glow of evening fell through—and ran rather than walked to the gates. Here he stood still seemingly bewildered. Then suddenly spreading his arms he went to the middle of the road-bed, as if to stop something that was coming from the same direction as the commutation. His wide-open eyes made the impression of blindness. While stepping backward to make way for something, a stream of half-intelligible words came from between his gritted teeth.

"Listen. Don't go. Listen, listen. Don't go. Stay here. Give him back to me. He's beaten black and blue. Yes, yes. All right. I'll beat her black and blue, too. Do you hear? Stay. Give him back to me."

Something seemed to move past him, because he turned and made as if to follow.

"Minna, Minna,"—his voice was weepy like a small child's—"Minna, listen. Give him back to me. I will—" He groped in the air as if to catch and hold some one fast. "My little wife—yes, yes—and I'll—and I'll beat her—so she's black and blue, too—I'll beat her, too—"

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with the hatchet—you see?—with the kitchen hatchet—I'll beat her with the kitchen hatchet. And that'll be the end of her. And then—yes, yes—with the hatchet—yes, with the kitchen hatchet—black blood."

Foam gathered on his lips, his glassy eyeballs rolled incessantly.

A gentle breath of the evening blew steadily over the forest, a rosy cloud mass hung in the western sky.

He had followed the invisible something about a hundred paces when he stood still, apparently having lost courage. With fearful dread in his eyes, he stretched out his arms, pleading, adjuring. He strained his eyes, shaded them with his hand, as if to discern the inessential being in the far distance. Finally his head sank, and the tense expression of his face changed into apathy. He turned and dragged himself the way he had come.

The sunlight laid its final glow over the forest, then was extinguished. The trunks of the pines rose among the tops like pale, decayed bones, and the tops weighed upon them like gravish black layers of mold. The hammering of a woodpecker penetrated the silence. Up above one last dilatory pink cloud traversed the steely blue of the sky. The breath of the wind turned dankly cold as if blowing from a cellar.

The flagman shivered. Everything was new and strange. He did not know what he was walking on, or what was about him. A squirrel hopped along the road-bed. Thiel pondered. He had to think of the Lord. But why? "The Lord is hopping along the tracks, the Lord is hopping along the tracks." He said it several times as if to get at something associated with it. He interrupted himself. A ray of illumination fell upon his brain. "Good heavens! That's madness." He forgot

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everything else and turned upon this new enemy. He tried to order his thoughts. In vain. They'd come and go and ramble away and shoot off at a tangent. He caught himself in the absurdest fancies, and shuddered at the consciousness of his impotence.

The sound of a child crying came from the birch grove near by. It was the signal for madness. Almost against his will he had to hurry to the spot where the baby, whom everybody had neglected, was crying and kicking on the unblanketed floor of its carriage.

What did he mean to do? What had driven him there? The questions were submerged in a whirling eddy of thoughts and emotions.

"The Lord is hopping along the tracks." Now he knew. Tobias—she had murdered him—Lena—the child had been entrusted to her care. "Stepmother! Beast of a mother!" he hissed between clenched teeth. "And her brat lives."

A red mist enveloped his senses. Two baby eyes penetrated through it. He felt something soft, fleshy between his fingers. He heard gurgling, whistling sounds, mingled with hoarse cries that came from he did not know whom.

Then something fell upon his brain like hot drops of sealing wax, and his spirit was cleared as from a cataleptic trance. Aroused to consciousness, he caught the quiver in the air that was the final reverberation of the signal, and in a trice he realized what he had been about to do. His hand relaxed its grip on the throat, under which the infant had writhed and squirmed. It gasped for breath, then began to cough and bawl.

"It's alive. Thank the Lord, it's alive."

He let it lie and hastened to the crossing. Dark clouds of smoke rolled in the distance, the wind drove them to

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the ground. He distinguished the panting of an engine that sounded like the intermittent, tortured breathing of a giant.

The stretch was shrouded in a cold twilight. But after a while the clouds of smoke parted, and Thiel recognized the train as being the freight that was returning with open empty cars and bringing home the men who had been working on the road-bed during the day. It had ample running time to stop at each station to drop or pick up the men.

Quite a distance from Thiel's hut the brakes began to be put on, and a loud clanking and clanging and rattling and screeching tore the silence before the train came to a standstill with a single shrill, long-drawn whistle.

About fifty men and women were in the different cars. Nearly all of them stood, some of the men with bared heads. There was a mystifying air of solemnity about them. When they caught sight of the flagman, a whispering began among them, and the old men drew their pipes from between their yellow teeth and held them respectfully in their hands. Here and there a woman would turn to blow her nose.

The conductor descended and advanced toward Thiel. The workmen saw him solemnly shake the flagman's hand, and then saw Thiel with slow steps almost military in their stiffness go back to the rear. None of them dared to address him, though they all knew him.

From the rear wagon they were lifting little Toby. He was dead.

Lena followed. Her face was a bluish white, brown rings underlined her eyes.

Thiel did not so much as cast a glance at her. She, however, was shocked at sight of her husband. His

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cheeks were hollow, his eyelashes and beard were plastered, his hair, it seemed to her, was gone grayer. Traces of dried tears all over his face. And an unsteady light in his eyes that made her shudder.

The stretcher had been brought back for transporting the body home.

For a while there was gruesome silence. Thiel lost himself in black depths of awful thoughts. Darkness deepened. A herd of deer started to cross the embankment. The stag stood still between the rails and turned his agile neck curiously. The engine whistled. He and the rest of the herd disappeared in a flash.

At the moment that the train was about to start Thiel collapsed. The train stood still, and counsel was held as to what had now best be done. Since every effort they made to bring the flagman back to his senses proved futile, they decided to let the child's body lie in the hut temporarily, and use the stretcher for conveying the flagman instead. Two men carried the stretcher, Lena followed, pushing the baby carriage, sobbing the whole way, the tears running down her cheeks.

The great purplish ball of the moon shone low between the trunks of the pine-trees. As it rose it paled and diminished in size until finally it hung high in the heavens like a swinging lamp, and cast a pale sheen over the forest, through every chink and cranny of the foliage, painting the faces of the processionists a livid white.

Cautiously but sturdily they made their way through the close second growth, then past broad nurseries with the larger trees scattered among the younger ones. Here the pale light seemed to have collected itself in great dark bowls.

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Occasionally a rattle came from the unconscious man's throat, and occasionally he raved. Several times he clenched his fists and tried to raise himself, his eyes all the time remaining closed. Getting him across the Spree was difficult, and a return trip had to be made to fetch Lena and the baby.

As they ascended the slight eminence on which the hamlet was situated, they met a few of the inhabitants, who forthwith spread the news of the misfortune. The whole colony came running.

Among her gossips Lena broke into fresh lamentations.

Thiel was with difficulty carried up the narrow stairway of his home and put to bed. And the men returned immediately to bring little Toby's body back.

Some of the old, experienced people advised cold compresses. Lena carried out their prescription eagerly, properly, dropping cloths into icy cold spring water and renewing them as soon as the unconscious man's burning forehead had heated them. Anxiously she observed his breathing. It seemed to come more regularly and to continue to improve each minute.

However, the day's excitement had told upon her, and she decided to try to get a little sleep. No use! Whether she held her eyes open or shut, she kept seeing the events of the past hours. The baby slept. Contrary to her wont, she had not paid much attention to it. Altogether she had turned into a different person. Not a trace of her former arrogance. The sick man with the colorless face shining with sweat dominated her even in sleep.

A cloud passed, obscuring the moon and throwing the room into complete darkness. Lena heard nothing but her husband's heavy though regular breathing. She

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felt creepy in the dark and considered whether she should not rise and kindle a light. But as she attempted to get up, a leaden weight on her limbs pulled her back, her lids drooped, she fell asleep.

Some time later the men returning with the boy's body found the front door wide open. Surprised at this, they mounted and found the upstairs door also open. They called the woman by her name. No answer. They struck a match. The flare of it revealed awful havoc.

"Murder, murder!"

Lena lay in her blood, her face unrecognizable, her skull broken open.

"He murdered his wife, he murdered his wife!"

They ran about witless. Neighbors came. One bumped against the cradle.

"Good heavens!" He shrank back, ashen pale, his eyes fixed in a horrified stare. The baby lay with its throat cut.

The flagman had disappeared. The search made for him that night proved fruitless. The next morning, however, the man who replaced him found him on the tracks at the spot where little Toby had been run over, holding the shaggy brown cap in his arm and caressing it as if it were a living thing.

The block signaler, apprised of his discovery, telegraphed for help. Several men tried with kindly inducements to lure Thiel from the tracks. He was not to be budged. The express then due had to be stopped, and it was only by the united efforts of the entire crew and the use of force that the man, who had begun to rave fearfully, could be removed from the railroad. They had to bind him hands and feet, and the policeman summoned to the spot guarded his transportation the

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whole way to Berlin, where he was examined in the jail and the next day was sent to a free psychopathic ward. He never let go of the shaggy brown cap. He watched over it with jealous tenderness.

Yardmaster

BY JACK McLARN

YARDMASTER

THERE hadn't been that much racket around Morgan Yard since the day Zeb Judson tried to clean aluminum powder out of the paint-spray machine with Red Devil lye and blew himself through the roundhouse wall in the resultant blast. I poked my head out from the call office cubbyhole to see what the yelling was about.

Mac Winston had been pawing with helpless and mounting rage through the accumulation of embargo notices, car tracers, diversions and other general confusion dreamed up by the lads at Division HQ to complicate the lives of yardmasters generally, and the one at Morgan Yard particularly. And now the red-headed six-foot three chief of Morgan was bellowing like a diesel fireman called for a muzzle-loading steam job.

"Come out here, you sawed-off has-been!" he howled as he spied me. "Look what that crew of pencil-chewers down at Plains City pulled on me this time! I've a mind to tell 'em to take this half-rumped job and—"

A gray-headed old crippled-up switch foreman turned call-boy has a few privileges, even around tough youngsters like Mac Winston. I said, "Okay, big shot, quit beating your breast. Let's see what's making you unhappy."

He skidded a sheet of yellow paper across his piled-up desk. It was a routine appointment bulletin:

All Concerned:

No bids having been received therefor, position of clerk, second shift, Morgan Yard, advertised by bulletin No. 15, is hereby assigned to Miss M. K. Callahan.

(Signed) K. I. D.

Superintendent

"What's so all-fired awful about that?" I demanded, throwing the thing back at him. "Ever since you nagged old man Waters into cussin' you out and takin' the pension, you been bumpin' your gums about not having a clerk. Now you got one. Why the squawk?"

Mac was a nice guy, maybe just a little young for a big assignment like Morgan Yard. He was doing all right. Except for one thing. He was too blamed anxious. Nobody could do anything right for him. He didn't trust anybody. He wanted the run of the show—and he dam' near had it. Morgan Yard was a one-man operation, and Mac Winston was the man. Nobody talked back to him—nobody, that is, except me, and I didn't count.

"Listen, you wooden-footed old crew-chaser," he bawled, and dust sifted from the wormy woodwork. "It ain't enough that I'm running this place like a widow-woman's farm. It ain't enough that I got to take guff from you. Now I got to put up with a woman. You know there hasn't been a she-clerk around this joint since—"

He had a point there. Morgan Yard always had been as masculine as the basement of the Railroad YMCA. But I didn't have to answer. The voice that broke into his tirade was smooth and soft—with just a hint of case-hardening lurking somewhere behind it.

"Yes, Mr. Winston. I think everybody knows."

She was cute. Five-four, certainly not much more, but everything was right where it should be. Blue eyes—like the Virginia sky over the apple orchards on an April morning. Little flecks of something in them that could have been summer lightning.

"Well," I said, edging away. "Crews to call, stuff like that. See you."

Mac stabbed a grimy finger at me. "Stay put, Flat-wheel," he snapped. Then he looked down at the girl.

"Miss, you must be this—this M. K. Callahan," he

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said, choosing his words like they were going to bite him. "It's no dice. Plains City made a bust. We haven't got facilities here for a woman. Flatwheel will get you a wire pass back—"

Clouds gathered in the blue eyes.

"Mr. Winston," she said, and I thought I heard distant thunder. "I've got a piece of paper signed by the superintendent. It says I'm second-shift clerk here. So, unless you want to take a crack at disqualifying me, I'm ready to go to work. Now."

Mac's face turned the color of a switch target. Every window framed a montage of delighted faces; everybody who got more than fifty bucks a month was ganged up, listening. I jerked a warning head at Mac, but he put his bunch-of-bananas-sized fists on the desk, glared down at the girl. She glared right back.

"All right, young lady," he snapped finally. "You sure asked for it. Flatwheel, sit in on this! I don't want any hereafters."

It was the damndest inquisition any clerk ever went through. Mac knew his business, and he was merciless. She read his dictation back to him faster than he mumbled it at her, even straightening out some of his weird grammar in the process. She could melt the keys right off the ancient Remington we had, and the stuff she turned out was downright pretty. And when Mac began blasting the trick stuff at her—home routes, interchange rules, demurrage, free time, things that even stumped me with all my forty years on the SG&A, she was right there with the answers. At sundown, Mac gave up.

"All right. Guess you'll get by," he grunted. "Check in tomorrow night. Flatwheel, take her up to Ma Gannon's—"

She looked up at him. She looked up at everybody, she was so doggoned little. "Thanks, Mr. Winston,"

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she said. "But from the looks of your desk, you're a little behind. Suppose I just start in now."

There was a bellow from the close-packed windows. Clint Winfiel, the second shift yard conductor, put it into words.

"Let the kid go to work, Mac!" he howled derisively. "Maybe even you can learn something."

Mac bit off what would have been a man-word, shoved the mess of mail at her with a sweep of his great paw.

"Okay," he growled. "If you're that hot, start on this stuff. Get stuck, ask Flatwheel—he knows all the answers. And I want to see that desk clean when I get back. Clean!"

He snatched up his lantern—cockroaches ran for cover as he slammed the door. The girl wrinkled her nose at me.

"You know," she said. "He'd be right sweet if he'd shave and get that chip off his shoulder. We'll do something about that." She looked around almost happily at the dingy windows, the worn floor, the fly-specked five-year-old calendar nudes flapping from the dirt-caked walls. Outside, the mournful hoot of a diesel horn announced the approach of a manifest, the drowsy click of the telegraph instruments came from the next room.

"Nothing like it, is there, Flatwheel?" she asked, and damned if she didn't mean it. "By the way—folks call me Mary."

It was late when Mac came stamping back into the office. His desk was cleaner than it had been in months. Nothing on it but a little pile of letters for his signature. Mary looked up from the consist she was typing. Her tawny hair glinted in the glaring light of the single bulb over her head.

"It's ready, Mr. Winston," she said, and I grinned in smug anticipation. "I think you'll find everything—"

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Mac flung water from his hat. I hadn't even noticed that it was raining, but it was. He dripped water over his desk, and Mary winced.

"Yard check," he growled. "Where is it?"

I stared at him. We hadn't made a yard check on second shift since Harding was President.

"Aw, hell, Mac," I spluttered, but he cut me off with a gesture.

"Miss Callahan," he said, with a sweet, patient courtesy that set my teeth on edge. "I want a yard check. Surely you know how to make one."

Jagged lightning ripped down from the sky, thunder rattled the windows, driving rain sluiced against the ramshackle building, and Mary looked down at her tailored suit, her tiny, open-toed slippers. Her chin quivered; I thought she was going to cry.

"All right, you second-string Simon Legree," I snarled, stamping over to get my slicker. "I'll make your blasted yard check for you, and I hope it chokes up your plumbing."

Mary's voice stopped me. It would have stopped a 4800.

"Thanks, Flatwheel," she said and I saw that the quiver in that short, sharp little chin was strictly from fury. "I asked the man for it. And no swell-headed overgrown bully of a stepped-up yardsnake is going to make me take low."

She grabbed a clip-board and a flashlight. Wet wind tore through the office as she opened the door, ducked her bare head against the rain, and vanished into the downpour. I glared at the yardmaster.

"May all your brats turn out to be trainmasters," I spat at him, mean as I could make it. "Mac, you're a—"

He sat down and pawed through the letters Mary had

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written while I told him, in great and meticulous detail. When I ran out of breath, he looked up at me.

"Flatwheel," he said. "Lay off me. You know what happened once. It won't happen again. No red-headed little shrimp is going to make a sucker out of me again."

The sound I made would have gotten me fired anywhere else.

"Look, you big shanty-car tyrant," I said, "so your big romance flopped. So a dame took you for a buggy-ride. Hell, what if the SG&A closed down a division every time it ditched a couple of dozen reefers?" I shoved the desk microphone of the yard communicating system at him. "Be decent for once! You've sold her on the idea you're hell on wheels. Call the kid in."

Maybe he was going to. But it was too late. The door burst open, the whole second-shift yard force streamed in, Mary in the middle. She was bundled to the ears in a big switchman's slicker; a rain-hat was jammed down on her tawny hair and water was running out of her sodden slippers. The look in her blue eyes would have broiled a hamburger.

She slammed the clip-board down in front of Mac. "Here," she said, low and soft, "is your yard check. The first one made on the night trick since the stars fell on Alabama. And now, you—you—"

Mac looked pleased. "So?" he said. "Going to tell the old man off and get yourself fired, eh? Sound off, honey!"

I moved the inkwell out of Mary's reach just in time. Her lips went white. She shoved the rain-hat back on her head and the tawny hair was all ringlets. Damp, pretty ringlets. But before she could blow her top, Clint Winfiel stepped in front of her, soaked to the skin. He ground one huge fist into the other palm.

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"Speaking for the gang, Mac," he said. "Let the kid alone. We want her around."

Mac's face lit up happily. He erupted out of his chair like a shanty-car cook hearing pay-call. "And just who pulled your chain, you duck-footed car-snatcher?" he howled, kicking a cuspidor across the office. "Why, I'll couple your ears behind your head. Outside!"

Mary's voice crackled like a 4800 slipping on sand. "Hold it!" she barked. "Thanks, Clint—almost fouled the deal that time. I'm staying. Don't worry about this guy—if I do leave before I'm ready, I'm carryin' signals."

I blinked. That wasn't just any tawny-haired kid talking tough. She sounded like somebody else. I began to wonder. And while I was wondering, she turned on her high heels and marched out. The second shift followed her. Mac rubbed his chin, his red whiskers sounding like sandpaper on a cut journal.

"Quite a girl, Flatwheel," he said. "Maybe she'll make a fair clerk."

I snorted. "She's already made a lop-eared jackass out of you, and she wasn't even trying. And another thing—"

He wasn't listening. "Maybe," he said, "we ought to shave a little more often. Clean up the office. After all, we do represent the SG&A."

"You do," I growled. "Not me."

I stumped out into the wet. Mary and Clint Winfiel were walking up the hill toward Ma Gannon's boarding house. Close together. Real close.

It didn't take long for things to start changing around Morgan Yard. Mary did it. "Miss Callahan" she was, for a couple of days. Then, all at once, she was "Miss Mary." In the switch shanties, in the round-houses, on the telephones and on the wires, wherever

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the Two Rivers Division touched, it was Miss Mary. Miss Mary, at Morgan Yard.

The crews blossomed out in new overalls and daily shaves. Old man Carew, the rip track foreman, bought a new battery for his hearing aid, and for the first time in three years found out what his crew had been saying to him. Miss Mary had a grim little session with Bat Corley, the bridge supervisor, and a bridge force descended upon the antiquated yard office like a flock of locusts and practically rebuilt the place.

Mac Winston was unhappy about the whole thing. He tried to find something wrong with Mary's work, but he couldn't. He didn't change—he was still the one-man ball of fire, he still ran the show like a ringmaster in a one-ring circus, but I sensed a vague uneasiness growing around him. I was enjoying it. Morgan Yard was running as smoothly as a new diesel. Maybe Mary was the reason, maybe not. Even the wet-eared young superintendent at Plains City noticed it, and unbent enough to say so in writing. I was snooping, as usual, when the letter came. Mary opened it, as she did all the mail. Her face was just a little pink when she laid it on Mac's desk.

"Nice letter from Plains City, Mr. Mac," she said, her eyes dancing happily.

"So we got a letter," he growled, nasty as a division auditor with a fouled-up station balance sheet. "What're you going to do now? Take bows the rest of the night? Gimme fifty-four's consist."

She didn't say anything. But for the first time I saw the hurt in her eyes. She went back to her desk. As soon as Mac barged out, I went over to put in my two-bits worth.

"Listen, Miss Mary," I said. "I'm known around here as a neck sticker-outer. Are you fallin' for that guy?"

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She didn't look up at me, just bent over her typewriter a little more. "Who did it, Flatwheel?" she asked, real soft. "A girl?"

"A girl," I growled. "Cute little tawny-headed trick. Rooked him out of a watch, a set of luggage, a ring—about every gadget she wanted, then ditched him for a brakeman. Maybe that's it, or maybe the guy's just plain mean. But—"

She looked up then, and I wished I were thirty years or so younger. Her eyes were all misty, but there was a steely little glint behind them, the glint of a newly-cut section of hundred-and-thirty-pound steel rail. She was tapping a pencil against her very white teeth.

"You know something, Flatwheel?" she said. "I think Mac needs shock treatment. And I think I know how to give it to him."

It sort of scared me, the way she said it. "Listen, honey," I said. "The guy's had it once. I don't want him to have to take it again. Not if I have to lower the boom on somebody."

She wrinkled her nose at me. "Don't worry, Flatwheel," she said. "Don't worry. We're on the same team."

The blow-off came sooner than I expected. And it rocked the Two Rivers Division down to its ballast. Mac was taking his two days off, and it dropped on him out of nowhere.

For a half-century it had been routine for the inbound freight conductors to climb down their cabooses, trudge a hundred-odd car lengths—damn near a mile to you—to deliver their waybills to the yard office. That took time, and time on a railroad costs like a Congressman's ideas. While Mac was taking his days, Mary changed all that, with a device so simple that the efficiency boys at Plains City wouldn't think of it in a million years.

She sent a bill boy in a motor-scooter to the spot in

the yard where the inbound cabooses stopped. The kid picked up the bills from the astounded crummy captains, scooted down the highway to the yard office, and by the time the boss shacks showed up to register, the bills were sorted, the switch lists were ready, and the yard was humming like a flock of angry hornets. It speeded up operations plenty.

When Mac showed up, the first thing he knew of the change was a note from Plains City, commending him upon the "Improved efficiency of operations at Morgan Yard." That did it.

He yelled for Mary in a voice that nearly blasted out the nice, clean windows. I was right outside when he thrust the letter at her.

"What in blazes are you trying to do?" he bellowed. "Get my job? If you were a man, I'd—I'd—"

Mary put her fists on her slim hips, her lower lip jutted out a good half-inch, her face flamed a stop sign.

"You'd what?" she grated, and again I tried to remember where I'd seen the likes of her before. She was tough, and she looked it. And she wasn't taking low from anybody. "Listen, you loud-mouth pinpuller, since when did you get the idea you were the only boss yardsnake around here? Why, anybody who couldn't run this crummy collection of has-beens couldn't pour water out of a boot with the directions on the heel. Who told you—"

Mac slammed a hand down on his desk; the inkwell turned a messy flip. The windows were crowded with grinning switchmen. I wagged a frantic pipe-down signal at Mac, but it was too late to stop him now.

"All right, you stringy-haired brat!" he howled. "You're so damned smart, suppose you run the place. Let's see what you do with it—"

He caught himself, but it was too late. A delighted yell rose from the gallery, Clint Winfiel's brawling

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voice louder than the rest. And Mary threw back her head and laughed, as happy as a kitten with a cornered mouse.

Only Mac knew he was the mouse.

"Suits me, mister," she said. The devil was dancing in her shining eyes. "I'll just take you up on that deal. Tomorrow morning. Seven A. M."

Mac's face turned purple. I hobbled back to my office, my head buzzing. It was as screwy as a switchman's nightmare. Hell, no woman could run a yard. Particularly a weird aggregation of misfit ideas like Morgan Yard. No woman. . . .

Then it hit me like a missed coupling. I remembered where I'd heard of the likes of her before.

It was six-forty-five the next morning when Mary climbed the winding stairs of the square, flat-roofed, air-conditioned communications tower, perched on steel piers high above the yard. It was all glass, and through the polarized panes the whole yard layout was a picture to delight the heart of a railroad man. There were loudspeakers scattered all over the yard, and by means of the sensitive microphone on the desk before him the yardmaster controlled the switch crews. But Mac Winston had the old-time switchman's contempt for the gadget—he was of the leather-lunged and shoe-leather-consuming breed. He preferred to deliver the word inches from somebody's nose, backing it up with a ham-sized fist, if need be.

When Mary mounted to the tower, every yardsnake, every clerk, everybody who was awake around Morgan Yard was somewhere within earshot. Mac Winston, dressed up like a sore thumb, or an off-duty yardmaster, was in his office, feet propped on his desk. He winked at me.

"Takin's a little tough, Flatwheel," he said. "She'll find out in about thirty minutes. This I gotta see."

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I didn't say anything. But I thought, *Okay, brother—you don't know what I know.*

The seven o'clock whistle at the shop shattered the morning, every switcher in the yard came to a dead halt, and the speakers crackled into sudden life.

"This is Mary Callahan," the girl's voice, metallic, impersonal, boomed through the early morning mist. "By direction of Yardmaster Winston, I shall act in his stead today."

Mac grinned. "Sure sounds scared, don't she?"

I grunted. She sounded scared, all right—like a lady swamp kitty in a convention of fieldmice.

"Listen carefully," she said. "Effective immediately, the following changes in switching procedure are being made. The house engine will take over the south yard—"

Mac's feet came down off his desk with a thud and his eyes went stormy. "Hell, she can't do that!" he bellowed. "She'll foul up the place—"

But the voice on the speakers cut him off. Smoothly, casually, as though she had been doing it all her life, Miss Mary tore Morgan Yard apart. I could see the crews grouped around some of the speakers, exchanging puzzled looks. I listened and—to my pop-eyed amazement—she was right. She was wrecking established precedent with every sentence, but she was right. She had put the finger on every entrenched weakness of our operation, and flicked it away. For ten minutes she reorganized the place in that calm, amplified voice of hers, with Mac's face turning a mottled pink.

Finally she said, "That does it, gentlemen. Take it easy. I don't want anybody hurt. But this yard was built to switch cars. Let's go!"

And, so help me, something like a muffled cheer rose from the clusters of yardmen, they scattered like dis-

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turbed members of an ant-colony, and the diesels roared into action. Mac stared at me in utter consternation.

"Flatwheel, it won't work! She'll screw this place up like a shanty car on Sunday morning. It won't work—" Then he looked at me pleadingly. "Will it, Flatwheel?"

I didn't answer him. He got up and began pacing the floor. I switched on the master speaker on his desk.

It was the most amazing thing anybody at Morgan Yard had ever seen. The switching diesels worked together like a football team sparked by an inspired quarterback. They fell upon the incoming trains—and there were plenty of them—with hoots of glee, tore them apart like huge sectional worms, shuffled the cars around, put them together again, and sped them on their way. The transfer cuts formed almost by magic, the huge 2,000-horse transfer jobs got out an hour ahead of any time I could remember.

Clint Winfiel, riding the footboard of his engine, clattered past the office. "Hey, Mac!" he yelled. "Come on out and learn something."

His voice faded. Mac was sitting slumped in his chair, staring out of the window. The toughness had faded out of him now and he looked like a big, hulking kid. I felt a little sorry for him. Like he said, "*Takin' is a little tough. . . .*" Right then it was tough. Plenty tough. And when a guy like Mac finds out that he's not as hot as he thought he was, it's tougher.

At eleven-thirty, when the crews took their twenty minutes, the platform was a shambles. There was more excitement around Morgan Yard than there had been since Ernie Weekes missed a signal and drove a flatcar through the eating house. And the windows were open. Mac couldn't help hearing what the crews were saying. Clint Winfiel particularly.

Mac looked over at me. "Put a sheet of paper in that

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typewriter, Flatwheel," he said. "Write a letter for me, will you?"

I blinked. His voice was courteous, almost gentle. But his eyes were bleak. I zipped the paper in place, pecked as he dictated. It was short.

Mr. K. I. Disman

Superintendent, Plains City.

Effective at once, you have my resignation as Yardmaster, Morgan Yard.

(Signed) M. N. Winston.

I looked up at him. "Can't take it, eh?" I said, mean as I could make it. But, dammit, I wanted to cry. He smiled, and it was an honest smile, not a cocky grin.

"No, Flatwheel," he said. "Maybe I can't. Gimme that."

He scribbled his name on the bottom of the letter, tossed it back at me.

"Mail it, will you?" he said. "And tell her I said, 'Thanks for the lesson. I'll remember it.'"

He stuck out his hand, then pulled it back. The door of the office closed very quietly behind him, his feet made little crunching sounds in the cinder platform.

I was blowing like an 1800 with leaking piston packing when I got to the top of the steps. The chill of the air-conditioned tower made me sneeze, and Mary whirled around, startled.

"Oh—Flatwheel," she said, and her face went all pink. "I thought maybe—"

She waved a proud little hand at the orderly array of cars in the yard below her, at the evenly spaced switchers. More cars were moving than had any right to move at one time. "How'm I doin'?" she asked. "Did—did he—"

I handed her the letter. And the smile faded from her lips as she read it. For a moment she stared at me, then she looked out over the yard.

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"I—didn't want it that way," she said, her voice barely audible. Somewhere a diesel horn hooted impatiently for a signal, for new instructions, she ignored the appeal. "I didn't—honest. Flatwheel, I didn't—"

I reached for the letter. "Well, you did it," I growled. "Hope you enjoyed it. See you around."

She was out of her chair, her hands tight on my arm. "Please," she said. "Where is he?"

"Over at his room, I guess," I said. "Packing his stuff."

She looked at her desk microphone, and suddenly she smiled.

"Flatwheel—how far will these speakers carry? How far can you hear them?"

I grunted. "Turn on full volume and the gals over at Sweetbriar say they can't study for listenin' to switchmen cuss. But—"

She pushed me toward the door. "Beat it, Flatwheel," she said. "I've got work to do. Plenty of work to do."

"Hey, wait a minute," I sputtered. "Ain't you done enough?"

She wrinkled her nose at me, and I melted, like I always did. "You'll see," she said, and there was a dimple in her chin I hadn't seen before. "You'll see."

I limped down that long spiral staircase again, hobbled to the yard office, sat down and wiped the sweat out of my eyes. Again the diesels were hooting for instructions. And Mary went to work. My eyes bugged out at her first words to the crews.

"Further changes in operations, gentlemen. First, the transfer jobs will make up the cuts—"

Even I knew that was putrid switching. But she went on. And on. And every single thing she said added to the sudden confusion. Then I realized that the volume was steadily building up on the speakers—the girls at

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Sweetbriar, ten miles away, were probably closing windows and thinking harsh thoughts about the SG&A. My ears were ringing. Everybody in the country. . . .

I saw Mac coming down the middle of the road, covering ground like a high-wheeled Pacific. He burst into the yard office, panting.

"What the hell?" he howled. "Flatwheel, she's gone nuts! She'll tie this place up—"

He was worried. It wasn't his job any more, he'd quit. But he was still worried. About her. I stabbed a finger firmly at a chair.

"Sit down, Mac," I said. "And listen. Hell, what've you got to lose?"

For two hours we sweated it out. For two hours Mary worked at her microphone. One by one, she boxed her diesels in to where they couldn't move. The manifests came, the dead freights howled for admission. Finally, at two-thirty, the last engine was boxed, the leads were blocked. For the first time in history, Morgan Yard was at a complete standstill.

Then Mary's voice, humble, contrite, came over the speakers, and blanketed half the county with: "Mac. Please Mac. Come and help me. Please!"

The grin that lighted Mac's homely face would have flagged the *Streamliner*. I jerked my head at him.

"On your way, Romeo. What're you waitin' for?" I said.

I watched him take the tower steps three at a time. And I heard Mary's voice over the speakers. "Mac—oh, Mac—"

And every diesel horn in the yard let go with a series of derisive hoots. But it was a couple of minutes before Mac's voice came booming over the speakers.

"All right, you guys. You've had your fun. Now get on the ball. Winfiel—get the lead out and unbottle number one—"

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Quietly, efficiently, the old cocky know-it-allness gone, Mac went about directing his diesels, unsnarling the mess Mary had made out of Morgan Yard. I watched her come lightly down the tower steps. She was all woman as she stood framed in the yard office doorway, her lovely eyes sparkling, her face a little flushed and invisible canary feathers clinging to her lips.

"You know," I grinned. "I used to switch cars on the Southern for a guy named Callahan. He could raise more hell and switch more cars than—"

She grinned at me. "Thought you'd figure it out, Flatwheel. Well?"

"Honey, the way you handled that yard this morning was wonderful. But that foul-up was sheer genius. Big Tim must have made a pretty fair yardmaster out of his granddaughter." I looked up at her questioningly. She nodded.

"Please—" she said. "Don't let him know that he was up against Tim Callahan's kind, will you? Sure, I'm a good yard boss—I can switch cars in the dark. Big Tim taught me, but—"

Mac's voice was booming through the hills, calm, even, competent; he was doing a superb job of cleaning house. Mary's eyes went dreamy. She wasn't watching me—and I clicked the talk-back button on the desk microphone so that every word we said would feed back through the speaker system to Mac, in the tower—and to half of Amherst County as well.

"Listen to him, Flatwheel," she said. "Funny—first time I saw him, we tangled like a couple of pack-rats. Now I'm getting all goose-pimple just listening to him. Gosh, I wish I could be home, cooking a steak for him. Wonder—"

And Mac's voice, with just the hint of a shake in it, came booming back, echoing through the hills.

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"Make it medium well, honey. French fries on the side."

Her hands flew to her mouth, she stared accusingly at me.

"Flatwheel, you—you—"

I grinned, gestured at the open button on the mike. Then she melted, leaned close to the instrument.

"Suits, mister," she said. "Maybe Ma Gannon won't mind my using her kitchen, if I tell her why. Six o'clock."

The diesel horns hooted enthusiastic approval, she leaned down and kissed my cheek. "Thanks, Flatwheel," she whispered. "I— thanks."

"Hey," I spluttered. "How about a steak for me?"

She shook her head firmly. "Not this time, pal. Later, sure, but not tonight. And you'd better be looking for another gal for second trick. I think this guy's going to like my cooking."

And she was gone. I wadded up Mac's letter of resignation, shied it at the wastebasket. There was a sheaf of waybills on the desk. I sighed, riffled through them, began to work up a switch list. There was a faint fragrance in the suddenly empty office. Like a Virginia apple orchard—along about blossom time.

Blowing Up a Train

BY T. E. LAWRENCE

BLOWING UP A TRAIN

*Wise old businessmen, when asked to give a formula for success, have often been known to reply: "Make sure you know the business before going into it." This axiom has often been extended to writing, where, as a rule, a writer can usually do his most effective work in dealing with subject matter with which he is familiar. Thomas Edward Lawrence may have carried this advice to extremes. Nevertheless, he could never have been accused of lack of authenticity for, before he wrote "Blowing up A Train," he had succeeded in blowing up a total of seventy-nine Turkish railway trains and bridges! T. E. Lawrence, the Lawrence of Arabia, is a fabulous historical figure. His life is far more fantastic than any fiction. He was an English soldier, author, archaeologist, traveler, train-wrecker, and translator. He was born in Tremadoc, North Wales in 1888, the son of a rich Irish landowner. He attended three colleges at the University of Oxford: Jesus, Magdalen, and All Souls. He never attended a lecture or dined in the hall, yet he took a "First" from the first in 1910, a bachelor's degree from the second in 1911, and was a research fellow of the third in 1919! In 1914 he became a member of the Cairo branch of the British Secret Service. In 1915 he organized an army of two hundred thousand wild Bedouins and scored many sensational victories over the Turks. In 1918 he became a Lieutenant-Colonel in the Arabian army. His famous best-seller, *Revolt in the Desert*, is actually a condensation of a four hundred-thousand word novel entitled *The Seven Pillars of Wisdom*, which was originally published by the Oxford Newspaper Press in 1926 in a limited edition of eight copies, of which three were destroyed! It is regarded as an important contribution to contemporary literature.*

BLOWING up trains was an exact science when done deliberately, by a sufficient party, with machine-guns in position. If scrambled at it might become dangerous. The difficulty this time was that the available gunners were Indians, who, though good men fed, were only half-men in cold and hunger. I did not propose to drag them off without rations on an adventure which might take a week. There was no cruelty in starving Arabs; they would not die of a few days' fasting, and would fight as well as ever on empty stomachs; while, if things got too difficult, there were the riding camels to kill and eat; but the Indians, though Moslems, refused camel-flesh on principle.

I explained these delicacies of diet. Ali at once said that it would be enough for me to blow up the train, leaving him and the Arabs with him to do their best to carry its wreck without machine-gun support. As, in this unsuspecting district, we might well happen on a supply train, with civilians or only a small guard of reservists aboard, I agreed to risk it. The decision having been applauded, we sat down in a cloaked circle, to finish our remaining food in a very late and cold supper (the rain had sodden the fuel and made fire not possible) our hearts somewhat comforted by the chance of another effort.

At dawn, with the unfit of the Arabs, the Indians moved away for Azrak, miserably. They had started up country with me in hope of a really military enterprise, and first had seen the muddled bridge, and now were losing this prospective train. It was hard on them; and to soften the blow with honour I asked Wood to accompany them. He agreed, after argument, for their sakes; but it proved a wise move for himself, as a sickness which had been troubling him began to show the early signs of pneumonia.

The balance of us, some sixty men, turned back to-

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wards the railway. None of them knew the country, so I led them to Minifir, where, with Zaal, we had made havoc in the spring. The re-curved hill-top was an excellent observation post, camp, grazing ground and way of retreat, and we sat there in our old place till sunset, shivering and staring out over the immense plain which stretched map-like to the clouded peaks of Jebel Druse, with Um el Jemal and her sister-villages like ink-smudges on it through the rain.

In the first dusk we walked down to lay the mine. The rebuilt culvert of kilometre 172 seemed still the fittest place. While we stood by it there came a rumbling, and through the gathering darkness and mist a train suddenly appeared round the northern curve, only two hundred yards away. We scurried under the long arch and heard it roll overhead. This was annoying; but when the course was clear again, we fell to burying the charge. The evening was bitterly cold, with drifts of rain blowing down the valley.

The arch was solid masonry, of four meters span, and stood over a shingle water-bed which took its rise on our hill-top. The winter rains had cut this into a channel four feet deep, narrow and winding, which served us as an admirable approach till within three hundred yards of the line. There the gully widened out and ran straight towards the culvert, open to the sight of anyone upon the rails.

We hid the explosive carefully on the crown of the arch, deeper than usual, beneath a tie, so that the patrols could not feel its jelly softness under their feet. The wires were taken down the bank into the shingle bed of the watercourse, where concealment was quick; and up it as far as they could reach. Unfortunately, this was only sixty yards, for there had been difficulty in Egypt over insulated cable and no more had been available when our expedition started. Sixty yards was

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plenty for the bridge, but little for a train: however, the ends happened to coincide with a little bush about ten inches high, on the edge of the watercourse, and we buried them beside this very convenient mark. It was impossible to leave them joined up to the exploder in the proper way, since the spot was evident to the permanent way-patrols as they made their rounds.

Owing to the mud the job took longer than usual, and it was very nearly dawn before we finished. I waited under the draughty arch till day broke, wet and dismal, and then I went over the whole area of disturbance, spending another half-hour in effacing its every mark, scattering leaves and dead grass over it, and watering down the broken mud from a shallow rain-pool near. Then they waved to me that the first patrol was coming, and I went up to join the others.

Before I had reached them they came tearing down into their prearranged places, lining the watercourse and spurs each side. A train was coming from the north. Hamud, Feisal's long slave, had the exploder; but before he reached me a short train of closed box-wagons rushed by at speed. The rainstorms on the plain and the thick morning had hidden it from the eyes of our watchman until too late. This second failure saddened us further and Ali began to say that nothing would come right this trip. Such a statement held risk as prelude of the discovery of an evil eye present; so, to divert attention, I suggested new watching posts be sent far out, one to the ruins on the north, one to the great cairn of the southern crest.

The rest, having no breakfast, were to pretend not to be hungry. They all enjoyed doing this, and for a while we sat cheerfully in the rain, huddling against one another for warmth behind a breastwork of our streaming camels. The moisture made the animals' hair curl up like a fleece, so that they looked queerly dishev-

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elled. When the rain paused, which it did frequently, a cold moaning wind searched out the unprotected parts of us very thoroughly. After a time we found our wetted shirts clammy and comfortless things. We had nothing to eat, nothing to do and nowhere to sit except on wet rock, wet grass or mud. However, this persistent weather kept reminding me that it would delay Allenby's advance on Jerusalem, and rob him of his great possibility. So large a misfortune to our lion was a half-encouragement for the mice. We would be partners into next year.

In the best circumstances, waiting for action was hard. To-day it was beastly. Even enemy patrols stumbled along without care, perfunctorily, against the rain. At last, near noon, in a snatch of fine weather, the watchmen on the south peak flagged their cloaks wildly in signal of a train. We reached our positions in an instant, for we had squatted the late hours on our heels in a streaming ditch near the line, so as not to miss another chance. The Arabs took cover properly. I looked back at their ambush from my firing point, and saw nothing but the grey hill-sides.

I could not hear the train coming, but trusted, and knelt ready for perhaps half an hour, when the suspense became intolerable, and I signalled to know what was up. They sent down to say it was coming very slowly, and was an enormously long train. Our appetites stiffened. The longer it was the more would be the loot. Then came word that it had stopped. It moved again.

Finally, near one o'clock, I heard it panting. The locomotive was evidently defective (all these wood-fired trains were bad), and the heavy load on the up-gradient was proving too much for its capacity. I crouched behind my bush, while it crawled slowly into view past the south cutting, and along the bank above my head

towards the culvert. The first ten trucks were open trucks, crowded with troops. However, once again it was too late to choose, so when the engine was squarely over the mine I pushed down the handle of the exploder. Nothing happened. I sawed it up and down four times.

Still nothing happened; and I realized that it had gone out of order, and that I was kneeling on a naked bank, with a Turkish troop train crawling past fifty yards away. The bush, which had seemed a foot high, shrank smaller than a fig-leaf; and I felt myself the most distinct object in the country-side. Behind me was an open valley for two hundred yards to the cover where my Arabs were waiting, and wondering what I was at. It was impossible to make a bolt for it, or the Turks would step off the train and finish us. If I sat still, there might be just a hope of my being ignored as a casual Bedouin.

So there I sat, counting for sheer life, while eighteen open trucks, three box-waggon, and three officers' coaches dragged by. The engine panted slower and slower, and I thought every moment that it would break down. The troops took no great notice of me, but the officers were interested, and came out to the little platforms at the ends of their carriages, pointing and staring. I waved back at them, grinning nervously, and feeling an improbable shepherd in my Meccan dress, with its twisted golden circlet about my head. Perhaps the mud-stains, the wet and their ignorance made me accepted. The end of the brake van slowly disappeared into the cutting on the north.

As it went, I jumped up, buried my wires, snatched hold of the wretched exploder, and went like a rabbit uphill into safety. There I took breath and looked back to see that the train had finally stuck. It waited, about five hundred yards beyond the mine, for nearly an hour

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to get up a head of steam, while an officers' patrol came back and searched, very carefully, the ground where I had been sitting. However the wires were properly hidden: they found nothing: the engine plucked up heart again, and away they went.

Misfeh was past tears, thinking I had intentionally let the train through; and when the Serahin had been told the real cause they said 'bad luck is with us.' Historically they were right; but they meant it for a prophecy, so I made sarcastic reference to their courage at the bridge the week before, hinting that it might be a tribal preference to sit on camel-guard. At once there was uproar, the Serahin attacking me furiously, the Beni Sakhr defending. Ali heard the trouble, and came running.

When we had made it up the original despondency was half forgotten. Ali backed me nobly, though the wretched boy was blue with cold and shivering in an attack of fever. He gasped that their ancestor the Prophet had given to Sherifs the faculty of 'sight', and by it he knew that our luck was turning. This was comfort for them: my first instalment of good fortune came when in the wet, without other tool than my dagger, I got the box of the exploder open and persuaded its electrical gear to work properly once more.

We returned to our vigil by the wires, but nothing happened, and evening drew down with more squalls and beastliness, everybody full of grumbles. There was no train; it was too wet to light a cooking fire; our only potential food was camel. Raw meat did not tempt anyone that night; and so our beasts survived to the morrow.

Ali lay down on his belly, which position lessened the hunger-ache, trying to sleep off his fever. Khazen, Ali's servant, lent him his cloak for extra covering. For a spell I took Khazen under mine, but soon found

it becoming crowded. So I left it to him and went down-hill to connect up the exploder. Afterwards I spent the night there alone by the singing telegraph wires, hardly wishing to sleep, so painful was the cold. Nothing came all the long hours, and dawn, which broke wet, looked even uglier than usual. We were sick to death of Minifir, of railways, of train watching and wrecking, by now. I climbed up to the main body while the early patrol searched the railway. Then the day cleared a little. Ali awoke, much refreshed, and his new spirit cheered us. Hamud, the slave, produced some sticks which he had kept under his clothes by his skin all night. They were nearly dry. We shaved down some blasting gelatine, and with its hot flame got a fire going, while the Sukhur hurriedly killed a mangy camel, the best spared of our riding-beasts, and began with entrenching tools to hack it into handy joints.

Just at that moment the watchman on the north cried a train. We left the fire and made a breathless race of the six hundred yards down-hill to our old position. Round the bend, whistling its loudest, came the train, a splendid two-engined thing of twelve passenger coaches, travelling at top speed on the favouring grade. I touched off under the first driving wheel of the first locomotive, and the explosion was terrific. The ground spouted blackly into my face, and I was sent spinning, to sit up with the shirt torn to my shoulder and the blood dripping from long, ragged scratches on my left arm. Between my knees lay the exploder, crushed under a twisted sheet of sooty iron. In front of me was the scalded and smoking upper half of a man. When I peered through the dust and steam of the explosion the whole boiler of the first engine seemed to be missing.

I dully felt that it was time to get away to support; but when I moved, learnt that there was a great pain in my right foot, because of which I could only limp

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along, with my head swinging from the shock. Movement began to clear away this confusion, as I hobbled towards the upper valley, whence the Arabs were now shooting fast into the crowded coaches. Dizzily I cheered myself by repeating aloud in English, 'Oh, I wish this hadn't happened.'

When the enemy began to return our fire, I found myself much between the two. Ali saw me fall, and thinking that I was hard hit, ran out, with Turki and about twenty men of his servants and the Beni Sakhr, to help me. The Turks found their range and got seven of them in a few seconds. The others, in a rush, were about me—fit models, after their activity, for a sculptor. Their full white cotton drawers drawn in, bell-like, round their slender waists and ankles; their hairless brown bodies; and the love-locks plaited tightly over each temple in long horns, made them look like Russian dancers.

We scrambled back into cover together, and there, secretly, I felt myself over, to find I had not once been really hurt; though besides the bruises and cuts of the boiler-plate and a broken toe, I had five different bullet-grazes on me (some of them uncomfortably deep) and my clothes ripped to pieces.

From the watercourse we could look about. The explosion had destroyed the arched head of the culvert, and the frame of the first engine was lying beyond it, at the near foot of the embankment, down which it had rolled. The second locomotive had toppled into the gap, and was lying across the ruined tender of the first. Its bed was twisted. I judged them both beyond repair. The second tender had disappeared over the further side; and the first three wagons had telescoped and were smashed in pieces.

The rest of the train was badly derailed, with the listing coaches butted end to end at all angles, zig-

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zagged along the track. One of them was a saloon, decorated with flags. In it had been Mehmed Jemal Pasha, commanding the Eighth Army Corps, hurrying down to defend Jerusalem against Allenby. His chargers had been in the first wagon; his motor-car was on the end of the train, and we shot it up. Of his staff we noticed a fat ecclesiastic, whom we thought to be Assad Shukair, Imam to Ahmed Jemal Pasha, and a notorious pro-Turk pimp. So we blazed at him till he dropped.

It was all long bowls. We could see that our chance of carrying the wreck was slight. There had been some four hundred men on board, and the survivors, now recovered from the shock, were under shelter and shooting hard at us. At the first moment our party on the north spur had closed, and nearly won the game. Mifleh on his mare chased the officers from the saloon into the lower ditch. He was too excited to stop and shoot, and so they got away scathless. The Arabs following him had turned to pick up some of the rifles and medals littering the ground, and then to drag bags and boxes from the train. If we had had a machine-gun posted to cover the far side, according to my mining practice, not a Turk would have escaped.

Mifleh and Adhub rejoined us on the hill, and asked after Fahad. One of the Serahin told how he had led the first rush, while I lay knocked out beside the exploder, and had been killed near it. They showed his belt and rifle as proof that he was dead and that they had tried to save him. Adhub said not a word, but leaped out of the gully, and raced downhill. We caught our breaths till our lungs hurt us, watching him; but the Turks seemed not to see. A minute later he was dragging a body behind the left-hand bank.

Mifleh went back to his mare, mounted, and took her down behind a spur. Together they lifted the inert figure on to the pommel, and returned. A bullet had passed

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through Fahad's face, knocking out four teeth, and gashing the tongue. He had fallen unconscious, but had revived just before Adhub reached him, and was trying on hands and knees, blinded with blood, to crawl away. He now recovered poise enough to cling to a saddle. So they changed him to the first camel they found, and led him off at once.

The Turks, seeing us so quiet, began to advance up the slope. We let them come half-way, and then poured in volleys which killed some twenty and drove the others back. The ground about the train was strewn with dead, and the broken coaches had been crowded: but they were fighting under the eye of their Corps Commander, and undaunted began to work round the spurs to outflank us.

We were now only about forty left, and obviously could do no good against them. So we ran in batches up the little stream-bed, turning at each sheltered angle to delay them by pot-shots. Little Turki much distinguished himself by quick coolness, though his straight-stocked Turkish cavalry carbine made him so expose his head that he got four bullets through his head-cloth. Ali was angry with me for retiring slowly. In reality my raw hurts crippled me, but to hide from him this real reason I pretended to be easy, interested in and studying the Turks. Such successive rests while I gained courage for a new run kept him and Turki far behind the rest.

At last we reached the hill-top. Each man there jumped on the nearest camel, and made away at full speed eastward into the desert, for an hour. Then in safety we sorted our animals. The excellent Rahail, despite the ruling excitement, had brought off with him, tied to his saddle-girth, a huge haunch of the camel slaughtered just as the train arrived. He gave us the motive for a proper halt, five miles farther on, as a

little party of four camels appeared marching in the same direction. It was our companion, Matar, coming back from his home village to Azrak with loads of raisins and peasant delicacies.

So we stopped at once, under a large rock in Wadi Dhuleil, where was a barren fig-tree, and cooked our first meal for three days. There, also, we bandaged up Fahad, who was sleepy with the lassitude of his severe hurt. Adhub, seeing this, took one of Matar's new carpets, and, doubling it across the camel-saddle, stitched the ends into great pockets. In one they laid Fahad, while Adhub crawled into the other as make-weight: and the camel was led off southward towards their tribal tents.

The other wounded men were seen to at the same time. Miffeh brought up the youngest lads of the party, and had them spray the wounds with their piss, as a rude antiseptic. Meanwhile we whole ones refreshed ourselves. I bought another mangy camel for extra meat, paid rewards, compensated the relatives of the killed, and gave prize-money, for the sixty or seventy rifles we had taken. It was small booty, but not to be despised. Some Serahin, who had gone into the action without rifles, able only to throw unavailing stones, had now two guns apiece. Next day we moved into Azrak, having a great welcome, and boasting—God forgive us—that we were victors.

A Toot for a Toot

BY OCTAVUS ROY COHEN

A TOOT FOR A TOOT

Few American writers have remained so popular for so long a time with the public as Octavus Roy Cohen. Certainly a good part of the reason must lie in his versatility, for Cohen has made a reputation not only as an outstanding humorist, but as a novelist, short story writer, detective story writer, and playwright. He was born in Charleston, South Carolina in 1891. He is a graduate of Porter Military Academy and received a degree from Clemson College in 1911. His famous stories of a colored railroad porter, Epic Peters, ran for many years in The Saturday Evening Post; some of the best of these were later collected into book form. For his Epic Peters stories and other works dealing with the southern scene, Octavus Roy Cohen received an honorary degree from Birmingham Southern Colleges for his services to Southern literature. The authenticity of Cohen's railroad stories is no accident, for he spent a year as civil engineer with the Tennessee Coal, Iron and Railroad Company. In the theatre Octavus Roy Cohen has distinguished himself with such fine plays as "Crimson Alibi," "The Scourge," "Come Seven," "Shadows," "Every Saturday Night," and others.

EPIC PETERS' instinct was at work. "I got a hunch," he murmured apprehensively, "that this ain't gwine be the swellest run I ever took." Two factors contributed to the hunch of the elongated Pullman porter. For one thing, there had been a ghastly dearth of tips from passengers boarding the midnight train at Birmingham. For another, the buzzer of his call board had been sounding incessantly since the "All aboard."

Somewhat peeved with the world in general, and his job in particular, Mr. Peters took his own sweet time about closing his vestibule as the Limited nosed

out into the chilly, murky night. He poked unenthusiastically at an occasional bit of dust, arranged his car step meticulously in the vestibule corner and then lurched unhapppily into the car.

Just as he suspected, the board indicated that Lower 6 required service. The training of many years came to the assistance of Epic Peters. As a sterling porter who was popular with Pullman and railroad conductors and whose name appeared frequently on the honor roll, Epic had learned to gauge the quality of those who traveled with him between the Alabama metropolis and New York.

"An' that feller in Lower 6," reflected Mr. Peters, "is the mos' kind I detest."

The person in question had waddled down the platform a half hour since in the wake of a redcap who was loaded down with many heavy bags. He was a large man with a florid complexion and an officious manner. His voice was shrill and penetrating. He wore a blue suit, gayly cut, and it was quite evident that he fancied himself considerable of a sheik.

The trousers were full, the socks fancy, the shoes of two-tone leather. His vest was piped with white braid and he sported a scarlet necktie in which reposed a huge pearl. He carried a silver-headed cane, a gaudy topcoat and wore a gray felt hat at a rakish angle. And Epic Peters saw him tip the staggering redcap a nickel.

Mr. Peters groaned.

"Tip nickels!" he grated. "I bet if he buys a ice-cream soda he wants a rebate when he returns the glass an' spoon."

The newcomer talked loudly and frequently as Epic escorted him to his berth and sought to satisfy the gentleman in the arrangement of his bags. Once Epic dared designate the sign hanging at the end of the aisle: Quiet. The traveler glared at Mr. Peters and

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announced that he was paying full fare and reckoned he'd talk if he wanted to—besides, the service was rotten.

Now, as Mr. Peters reluctantly answered the summons from the fat gentleman's berth, it was to find the big head poked out between the curtains. The passenger glared at Epic and anathematized the service. It seemed that some cinders were creeping in through the screen, that there was a wrinkle in the sheet and that his spare blanket was not properly folded.

Epic bore up under the tirade with the dignity becoming a colored gentleman and philosopher. He did not even deign to inform the man that he was the best berth maker on the Birmingham station and known throughout the Southeast as one of the finest colored men ever to receive a monthly wage from the Pullman Company. With vast and disdainful patience he performed the tasks required by the exacting traveler, and heard that gentleman say peevishly:

"Well, I hope to goodness I can get some sleep."

As Epic moved away he indorsed the wish: "Lawsy knows, I hope so too. Dawg-gone that feller. He buys one ticket an' thinks he's Mistuh Pullman Illinois hisse'f."

As Epic moved down the aisle he was conscious of certain movements in Section 8. He turned quickly—just in time to see a ratlike face and a pair of beady eyes withdrawn quickly. "That feller in Lower 8," Epic told himself, "also ain't the craziest sort I is about."

As a matter of fact, the gentleman in Lower 8 would have rasped Epic's nerves intensely had not the fat person in Lower 6 been so obtrusively obnoxious. And, had Epic known it, his instinctive antipathy for the ratlike little man in 8 was not unfounded.

The person in Lower 8 was about five feet four inches in height. He had a slender, wiry figure on which cheap clothes fitted uncertainly. His eyes were beady and he had a disturbing habit of talking out of the side of his mouth. His hands were amazing, however; strong and long-fingered and amazingly deft.

At birth the little man had been christened Aloysius Bryan by a doting and unsuspecting mother. Since that time he had, in the pursuit of his chosen profession, used other names as convenience suggested. The police of various cities knew him as Danny the Dip, Dan Bryan, the Runt, and Dippy Dan. The name Aloysius departed with his last short trousers.

To give Aloysius full credit, it must be admitted that he was an expert pickpocket. He operated alone—and frequently. He had few friends and no confidants, and only a too great fondness for large diamonds steered him into trouble with the police. He could scissor or reef a victim with the best of them, leaving the unwitting contributor ignorant of financial loss until a considerable time after.

Birmingham had offered an excellent field for Aloysius. Pickings had been reasonably easy. But that very day a certain embarrassing situation had arisen on the First National Bank corner—something which informed Danny the Dip that he'd be wise to seek other fields for his nefarious activities. So this night found him on the Limited with a New York ticket in his pocket and a profound hope that no plain-clothes bull would impede his departure from the South.

Epic's trained eye warned him against Aloysius when that furtive gentleman sidled onto the train and slipped into his berth. Mr. Peters was not unfamiliar with gentlemen who make a living by nimble wits, fingers and conscience. Mr. Peters boasted that he could spot a train hustler as far as he could see one,

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and something told him from the first that this ratlike gentleman was worth observing.

Yet, as the train roared through the chilly night and sleep refused to come to Epic, that person sat in the smoking room and reflected that of the two gentlemen—the one in Lower 6 and the one in Lower 8—he'd prefer a half dozen of Aloysius to one of the former. After all, Epic was not personally concerned with undersized persons who looked and acted like crooks, but the blatant officious type brought him agony of soul and misery of spirit.

Quite early in the morning the train rolled under the shed of the Atlanta station. The Atlanta Pullman was cut out and the train made up anew for the run to New York. There Captain Sandifer, the grizzled and veteran Pullman conductor of whom Epic was extremely fond, took over the diagrams and chatted briefly with his favorite porter.

"Things going all right, Epic?"

"Not so many, cap'n. I got on my car one of them white folks that thinks he boughten the comp'ny when he paid his money fo' a ticket."

"Been riding you, eh?"

"Nossuh, not me, he ain't. But he sho ain't the fonder kind of passenger I is of."

"I don't blame you, Epic. But, cheer up! The run won't last forever."

"Nossuh, maybe not. But it seems mos' that long."

By the time the train pulled out of Atlanta half the passengers had risen and wandered into the diner—among them the stout gentleman and Aloysius. When they returned their sections were already arranged for the day and Epic was busy elsewhere in the car.

The stout person summoned Epic. "Porter," he snapped, "what do you mean by putting my small bag under the seat?"

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"I don't mean nothin', white folks. Always puts the bags under the seats."

"Hmph! Get it out immediately."

"Yassuh, cap'n."

Epic bent over and wrestled with the bag. He rose and bowed.

"That all, mistuh?"

"No, it isn't. I want two pillows and a hat bag."

"Y-y-yassuh, boss; right away. I aims to give service, which is how come they to call me Hop Sure."

"I'm not interested in your nicknames. What I want is the pillows."

Epic was shuddering with futile rage as he went on the errand. And while he was extracting pillowcases from the linen cabinet at the end of the aisle, he saw Captain Sandifer come through the car and answer the summons of the obtrusive stout person. Epic listened in.

"Impertinent porter you have on this car," rasped the person with the white piping on his vest.

Sandifer frowned. "Epic Peters?"

"I don't know his name or anything about him. I know he is inefficient and impertinent."

The eyes of the Pullman conductor narrowed. He knew the type of man he was conversing with, and one of the great regrets of his life was that duty prohibited him from exterminating such insects.

"Epic is never impertinent," he defended frigidly.

"He was impertinent to me."

"How?"

"Do I have to give details? Isn't my word sufficient?"

Sandifer's face was dead white with anger. The man was simply insufferable.

"Perhaps," said the conductor coldly.

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"I'll file a report of this with the Pullman Company," raged the person in Section 6. "It is outrageous."

"Sorry," said Sandifer as he moved away.

It was with difficulty that Epic concealed his elation as he climbed to the upper berth in search of two pillows. Bless Cap'n Sandifer's heart! There was sho nuff quality white folks. Reckon he knowed when a feller was pertinent or not. Wouldn't let no trash like this pouter pigeon put nothin' over on him! Not Cap'n Sandifer, nossuh!

The florid person seemed to enjoy his futile anger. He snatched the pillows from Epic's hand and tried to stare frostily, but Mr. Peters' genial countenance was wreathed in a smile of sheer good humor. It seemed that nothing could ruffle his calm—a fact that served to annoy the man in Lower 6 more than ever.

Humming gayly, Epic gave his attention to Section 7. The lady who had occupied the lower had left the train at a little station beyond Atlanta. The upper berth of that section had not been occupied. Mr. Peters worked swiftly and well, rather happily conscious that two pairs of eyes were focused upon him. One pair of eyes belonged to the fat person. The other was the property of Danny the Dip, *né* Aloysius.

Mr. Peters bent joyfully to his task. He adjusted the two mattresses in the upper berth, discarded used linen, neatly folded blankets and arranged pillows. Then he snapped the upper berth shut and commenced arranging the cushions of the lower.

He snapped the back rests into place and shoved one of the seat cushions back, and as he did so a glitter caught his eye. From the green-carpeted floor something twinkled up at him. A frown creased his mahogany forehead as he bent to pick it up.

When he straightened he was possessed of a queer

excitement. He was holding in his hand a platinum ring which was set with a single gorgeous diamond.

Hop Sure's heart missed a beat. He knew that he cradled a young fortune in his palm, and his thoughts flashed ahead to the possibility of a sizable reward. It never occurred to him to do anything save report the matter to Captain Sandifer and turn in the ring to the Pullman office. Epic's honesty was unswerving. But he would have been less than human had he failed to speculate upon the value of his finding and the reward which a grateful and generous owner might bestow. His tremendous hand closed over the ring and he dropped it into the pocket of his coat. Then he turned quickly.

The stout man in Section 6 was staring straight at him. Unquestionably that gentleman had witnessed the discovery of the ring, and Epic experienced a sense of annoyance. He glanced elsewhere about the car, curious to know whether any one else had observed the finding of the ring. No one seemed interested. Even Aloysius, alias Danny the Dip, was staring out of the window, apparently absorbed in the speeding landscape.

Epic swung back to his work. His heart sang within him, for it seemed that his early hunch that this was to be an unpleasant and unprofitable trip was only half right. Unpleasant, yes, but unprofitable—

"Hot ziggity dam!" exclaimed Mr. Peters. "Diamonds is the most thing I love to find."

Some passengers had been late in rising. Two or three had eaten breakfast in their berths and were only now showing signs of stepping into their clothes. Consequently the labor of straightening the car had dragged interminably.

When Captain Sandifer next passed through the car Epic didn't even see him. He was perched on the arm

of a lower, arranging mattresses in an upper. But the fat man in Section 6 noticed that Epic did not report the finding of the diamond to the Pullman conductor, and the fact took on a sinister significance to the officious traveler.

With an armful of used linen Hop Sure made his way to the end of the car. And there, standing in the aisle, some one pressed sharply against him. He raised his head, to stare into the beady eyes of Danny the Dip.

Aloysius was trying to be affable. He spoke out of the corner of his mouth:

"Are we on time, porter?"

"Yassuh, right on the minute."

"Yeh? Nice day, ain't it?"

"Pretty nice, boss man."

Aloysius looked around. "Where's the drinking water?"

Epic designated the cooler and hastened to secure for his undersized passenger a paper drinking cup. "There you is, cap'n."

Danny the Dip thanked Hop Sure and inhaled a cupful of ice water. Then he returned to his place in Section 8 while Epic engrossed himself once more in the task of fixing his car.

Eventually the job was completed and Epic sank into an unused section for a well-earned rest. He tried to make himself comfortable, but in spite of his best efforts he fidgeted with the consciousness that the eyes of the fat man were focused upon him.

Captain Sandifer came through the car. Epic determined to turn the diamond ring over to him then and there. But before he could speak to the Pullman conductor that individual was stopped by the rasping voice of the fat person in Section 6:

"Conductor!"

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Sandifer stopped in the aisle. It was obvious that the passenger was not overly popular with him.

"Well?" he asked bleakly.

"I consider it my duty to report something to you."

"What?"

"I very much question the honesty of your porter."

"Well," snapped Sandifer, "I don't!"

"You wouldn't, of course." The pursy lips of the traveler creased into a sneer. "Has he turned over to you anything which he found in the car this morning?"

Sandifer shook his head. "No. But if he found anything of value he will."

"Evidently your confidence is very great—much greater than mine. I shall write a report of this to the Pullman Company and—"

The conductor was furious. "Now, listen here!" he said curtly. "You've done a lot of insinuating and haven't backed it up with a fact. If you've got any accusations to make, make 'em. But I'm not going to be bothered with your infernal hot air any longer."

"Oh, is that so! For all I know, you're in cahoots—"

"Mister," warned Sandifer sweetly, "I value my job very highly, but not so highly that it would be safe for you to finish that sentence."

Epic wriggled with glee. That was the way to talk to uppity folks. Trust Cap'n Sandifer for that.

"Just the same," said the fat person, "when your porter made up Section 7 he found something which seemed to me to be a valuable diamond ring."

"He did, eh?"

"He certainly did."

"Was it your ring?"

"No-o-o."

"Belong to any friend of yours?"

"No, but—"

"Then it's none of your business."

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Sandifer turned on his heel and strode from the car, white-faced with anger. He refused to give the fat man the satisfaction of accepting from Hop Sure at that time the ring which had been found.

Having known Epic for years, there was no question in the mind of the conductor that Mr. Peters possessed an ineluctable honesty. And he took a keen satisfaction in the look of thwarted anger which came into the fish-like eyes of the man in Section 6.

Epic himself was very happy. Cap'n Sandifer was his friend—always had been and always would be. He knew the captain for a rigid taskmaster, but one who appreciated efficient and honest effort.

The train was approaching Charlotte, and Epic noticed a bit of activity in Section 8. Aloysius was strapping his suitcase very carefully. It was evident that he was making preparations to leave the train. This occasioned mild surprise in the breast of Mr. Peters, for he happened to know that the ratlike person held a ticket for New York.

But the destination of Danny the Dip did not interest Mr. Peters for very long. He lounged in his seat and turned his thoughts into pleasant channels which had to do with the discomfiture of the fat man. Epic understood and appreciated the delicacy of feeling which had prompted the conductor to say nothing about the ring in the presence of the protuberant gentleman in Section 6.

Plenty of time to return the diamond ring. Smiling broadly, Epic dropped his hand into his pocket to assure himself that everything was all right.

Quite suddenly, and with comprehensive completeness, the smile vanished from Epic's countenance and in its stead there came an expression of abysmal consternation. His fingers fumbled frantically and he was stricken by a chill.

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"Oh, whoa is me!" he mourned as the potentialities of the situation were thrust upon him. "That ring has went!"

Gone — vanished — completely and absolutely departed somewhere else!

It required less than a split second for Epic Peters to realize that he was in a horrid dilemma. His distaste for the fat man in Section 6 now flamed to a violent and aggressive hatred.

He had found the ring, and the fat man had seen him find it. Bulwarked behind the knowledge of his own honesty, he had taken his own time about reporting the discovery to Cap'n Sandifer, and the fat man had made a bad matter worse by suggesting to the Pullman conductor that Epic intended to steal the ring.

Now the ring was gone, and Cap'n Sandifer knew that he had found it. Sooner or later Sandifer would ask for the ring, and Epic groaned at the prospect of telling him that it had disappeared. Sandifer might believe Epic, but by the same token the conductor would make a report of the whole affair to the company officials. In addition to that, the fat man would also see to it that the matter came to the most unfortunate ears.

There would be an investigation—perhaps a trial. Epic knew that he would be dismissed from the service—kicked out of the profession to which he had devoted his life. The very least that could be proved against him was gross carelessness, and there was grave danger that he might be convicted of dishonesty.

The spirit of Mr. Epic Peters groveled. He hit bottom and continued going down. "Oh, gosh," he moaned, "ol' man disaster has sho slapped me right in the face!"

At first Epic was unable to do anything but reflect upon the ghastly situation. Then he commenced to

hunt. He hunted violently for that ring, searching every nook and cranny of the car. The fat man was regarding him sneeringly. And the beady eyes of Danny the Dip never left the wriggling figure of the distraught porter.

The ring was nowhere to be found. Epic now was in terror lest Cap'n Sandifer choose this inopportune time to demand it. To avoid such a catastrophe, Hop Sure retired to the unoccupied drawing-room. He desired solitude and lots of it. He left the door open, but managed to keep out of sight.

He commenced thinking. Never in all his eventful career had the brain of Mr. Peters functioned with such amazing speed. Logic hammered insistently. The ring was lost. It hadn't jumped out of the window, it wasn't on the floor of the car, nor was it concealed in the upholstery. Unquestionably, however, it was still in the car.

Epic's thoughts flashed to the fat man, but he immediately discarded the thought that that person had anything to do with it. Then he remembered the ratlike individual in Section 8.

From the very first moment that he set eyes on Aloysius, Epic had felt an antipathy to that gentleman. He knew there was something wrong about Danny the Dip—something fearfully and radically wrong.

He cocked his head on one side so as to command a view of the car. Danny the Dip was undoubtedly planning to get off at Charlotte. The significance of this impressed Hop Sure.

The man had a ticket to New York. Why, then, should he suddenly alter his plans and leave the train in North Carolina? Something queer—dawg-goned queer, too. Instinct informed Epic that Danny the Dip was in some manner connected with that ring. He thought Danny had witnessed the finding. He wasn't

sure, but he thought so. Apparently Danny had been looking out of the window at the time, but Epic had a hunch that those beady eyes hadn't missed much.

Epic remembered something else. He recalled the queer actions of Aloysius near the water cooler. Danny the Dip had accosted him and engaged him in conversation about matters of no importance whatever. During that conversation the Dip had stood very, very close to Epic—so close, reflected the porter, that he could very easily have slipped nimble fingers into the capacious pocket of Epic's coat and extracted therefrom the diamond ring.

Epic set his feet squarely on the floor. He felt certain that he had hit upon the correct solution; facts dove-tailed perfectly.

Mr. Peters was desperate. He knew that he had only a few minutes of grace. Very shortly the train would be in Charlotte and Aloysius would leave. Once away, Epic knew he'd never again set eyes on the man or the ring.

Mr. Peters was spurred to drastic action. He summoned a genial, disarming smile and plastered it on his face. Then he approached Danny the Dip.

"Gittin' off at Charlotte, boss man?"

The ratlike eyes darted to Epic's countenance.

"Yes."

"Lemme brush you off, suh."

Epic held a whisk broom insinuatingly before the eyes of Aloysius. The wiry little man hesitated, then rose. Immediately Epic stepped toward the end of the car.

"Right this way, cap'n, so's the dust won't bother nobody."

Aloysius frowned but followed. To have reseated himself might have attracted attention.

Epic stopped at the door of the drawing-room and

motioned Aloysius to enter. The professional pick-pocket hesitated briefly, then stepped inside. Immediately Epic extracted a cloth from his pants pocket and knelt on the floor before the little man. He polished his shoes assiduously.

The heart of Mr. Peters was pounding. Ordinarily none too well supplied with physical courage, he was now daring everything to avert personal disaster. He rose, pocketed the dust cloth and turned.

His slim, angular body functioned smoothly. One skinny arm reached out and slammed the drawing-room door. Well-trained fingers snapped the lock. Then Hop Sure turned upon the astounded Danny an expression which had lost all of its mild good nature.

Danny the Dip stepped back defensively. His eyes narrowed to pin points and the color drained from his cheeks.

"What the—"

"Jus' a minute, white folks!" Epic's words came like drops from an icicle. "You got somethin' I want."

"Why, you—"

"No need swearin' at me, neither. I never aim to be nothin' but respec'ful, an' my rule ain't gwine be broke, but you got somethin' that Ise gwine have, no matter how you forces me to git it."

Danny was thinking swiftly. The lengthy porter showed no hint of weakness or lack of courage. Epic spoke again. Words seemed to restore his fast-ebbing bravery.

"Gimme that di'mond ring!" he commanded harshly, extending his hand.

"Wh-what diamond ring?"

"Don't try no fumadiddles with me, white folks. You know good an' well what di'mond ring you has got. An' I crave to have it."

"You're talking crazy."

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"H'm, I reckon not. Mistuh, I ain't no fool—honest I ain't. Somethin' seemed wrong with you right fum the first, an' it don't look reasonable to me that no man would buy a ticket to New Yawk an' git off at Charlotte less'n he had a good reason. So if you just gimme the ring—"

"I won't give you anything."

Epic shrugged.

"A'right, mistuh. If you won't, you won't, an' I ain't gwine argufy."

Danny the Dip stepped forward. "Let me out of here."

"Not so's you could osserve it, mistuh. Heah you stays until you gimme that ring or else until the police gits you."

"Police?"

"You di'n't misunderstan' me none. I said police, an' b'lieve me, mistuh, I meant police."

"But—but, porter—"

"I don't aim to git butted, neither. If you gimme that ring I promise to let you leave the train at Charlotte an' not say nothin' to nobody. If you refuse, I han's you over to the police right at the station. An' don't think I won't tell 'em why."

"Now, listen." The voice of Aloysius had taken on a whiny, wheedling note. "A little cash—"

"Cash don't mean nothin' to me, or even less than that. It's di'mond ring fo' Hop Sure or jail fo' you. Now, which?"

Danny's lip curled. "If I had a gun—"

"Man, tha's the most thing I was scared of when I brung you in heah. You ain't never gwine know how frightened I was of that. I sho despises to get kilt."

Aloysius glanced out of the window. The train was slowing down. Already they were within the corporate limits of Charlotte. Epic interpreted the thoughts of

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the man and grinned cheerfully.

"Take all the time you want," he invited. "But the minute us stops at that station with you still havin' that ring, I yells fo' the police."

Aloysius knew when he was beaten. Threats, cajolery and bribery had failed.

"You promise you won't even hint to anybody?"

"Gosh—yes, I promise. All I crave is that jool."

Danny the Dip probed into his watch pocket and extracted therefrom a gleaming diamond ring. He placed it resentfully in Epic's palm.

"There!" he rasped. "And if you break your promise I'll get you if it's the last thing I do."

"Don't you worry, mistuh. I wouldn't break that promise if I wanted to."

Intoxicated with happiness, Epic sped to the platform, where he busied himself arranging suitcases for the departing passengers. He felt the need of company and lots of it. Aloysius would never dare start anything while others were watching.

The train stopped at the station in Charlotte. A half dozen passengers alighted, and foremost among them was Danny the Dip.

Epic was on the platform, and it was he who handed Danny's suitcase to that slender gentleman. The pick-pocket grabbed it from the porter and strode swiftly away. Epic gazed ruefully after him.

"Well, I'll be dawg-bit! He didn't even gimme a tip."

The train pulled out. As Epic reëntered his car he was conscious of the fishy, suspicious glance of the fat man in Section 6.

But that glance failed to annoy Mr. Peters now. He felt an enormous disdain for the fat person. Interfere in his affairs, eh? Reckon he'd show him something!

Epic settled into the seat recently vacated by Danny

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the Dip. And suddenly he felt the ghastly effects of what medical men technically term a nervous reaction.

Mr. Peters was cold and limp all over. He had battled bravely through a crisis and achieved victory, but the strain exacted its toll now, and Epic could actually feel the strength flow out of his finger ends.

His mind dwelt on terrible things. Suppose Aloysius had drawn a gun. Suppose Aloysius had attacked him. Suppose—oh, most horrid of thoughts!—suppose he had been wrong and Aloysius had not possessed the ring.

But it was all over now. The sun was shining and the little birdies were warbling their gayest tunes. Mr. Peters planned every little detail of the triumphal movement when—before the suspicious eyes of the fat man in Section 6—he would present to Captain Sander the gorgeous diamond ring which had caused him such agony.

He had it again, safe and sound. Brain had triumphed over dishonest cunning. Epic permitted himself to smile as he slipped his right hand into his pocket and felt for the diamond.

He blinked—he blinked again. He sat up straight in his seat, conscious of a terrible sinking sensation at the pit of his tummy.

“Great wigglin’ tripe,” he gasped, “that ring has gone again!”

And now Mr. Epic Peters knew that all the suffering which he had already experienced was mere rehearsal. For every ounce of misery which had been his before reaching Charlotte, there was now a ton to rack and torture him. He thought of the nimble-fingered Aloysius—gone out of his life forever—and of the diamond ring for which he had blithely risked total extermination.

Epic uncoiled himself and searched the section in

which he sat. Then he crawled the length of the car on hands and knees. A sweet-faced old lady questioned him.

"What's the matter, porter?"

Epic raised a haggard face.

"Ev'ything, ma'am."

"Lost something?"

"Lady, I sho has. Seems like I has los' my least on life."

The ring did not appear. More and more certainly the conviction grew upon Epic that Aloysius had double-crossed him. He returned to the vacant section and flung himself down on the seat. Forlornly he plunged his hand into the pocket of his coat.

The index finger touched something. A hole!

Instantly an expression of eager hope crossed the troubled brow of Mr. Peters. With decisive strength he ripped the hole to several times its size. He dropped his entire hand into the cavity which existed between coat and lining.

And then something startling happened to his countenance. His jaw sagged, his eyes popped, a cold perspiration stood out on his brow.

He withdrew from his pocket a hand which trembled with an excess of excitement. Slowly he opened his fist. Sunlight, streaming in through the window, was reflected dazzlingly into the eyes of the lengthy Pullman porter.

Gleaming gloriously in his hand there lay not one diamond ring but two. Two rings! Two diamonds! Two platinum settings!

"Great sufferin' stew meat," gasped Epic, "the ring has done twinned!"

Captain Sandifer appeared. Epic did not hesitate. He slipped one of the rings into his trousers pocket as he rose to full length.

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He accosted the conductor, and before the disappointed eyes of the fat person in Section 6, Mr. Peters extended to his superior the identical diamond ring which had been discovered early that morning in Lower 7.

"Cap'n Sandifer," he announced in a bored tone, "heah's a li'l trifle I found this mawnin' while I was performin' my chores."

Sandifer accepted the ring and thanked Epic. Then he flashed a gleeful glance at the thoroughly cowed fat gentleman in Section 6. Words seemed unnecessary. But Epic Peters insisted on speaking:

"Cap'n Sandifer?"

"What is it, Hop Sure?"

"Is you willin' to do me a favor?"

"Certainly."

"Some folks is always th'owin' away aspersions. Would you mind walkin' th'oo the train an' askin' ev'ybody if they has lost a di'mond ring?"

"But I'm sure this was lost by the lady in Lower 7."

"Yassuh, boss, so'm I. But I want to feel sure there ain't nobody else in the train lost no other di'mond."

More to discomfit the man in Lower 6 than to please Epic, Captain Sandifer agreed. He canvassed the train and was back in ten minutes.

"All clear, Epic," he announced. "Nobody else on the train has lost anything."

"You got that positivel, cap'n?"

"Absolutely."

Epic trailed the Pullman conductor the length of the car. They stood together on the vestibule platform.

"Cap'n Sandifer," said Epic, "I craves to ask you a question."

"All right, Hop Sure. What is it?"

"It's just this, cap'n. Suppose while I was porterin', a passenger on my car happened to give me—of his own

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free will an' discord—a swell di'mond ring—just give it to me! Would that ring belong to me, or should I turn it in to the company?"

The conductor grinned.

"If he gave it to you, Epic, it would be yours."

Mr. Peters nodded beatifically.

"Thanks, cap'n. Tha's all I yearned to know."

The Pullman conductor passed on. Epic stood motionless, busy with his thoughts. He understood everything now. He even understood why Danny the Dip had left the train at Charlotte. Danny had seen trouble brewing, and being a professional crook, was not desirous of being discovered among the passengers should police be called upon to investigate.

Mr. Peters gazed at the gorgeous stone which glittered up at him. Then his lips twisted into a smile.

"All I got to do now," he reflected happily, "is find a gal to fit this."

Virginia and Truckee

BY LUCIUS BEEBE AND CHARLES CLEGG

VIRGINIA AND TRUCKEE

Many of the writers in this volume have achieved their background by beginning to work on the railroad when they were youngsters and learning the game from the bottom up. Lucius Beebe is unusual, inasmuch as he has attained a great deal of his knowledge of railroading by riding around in his private railroad car! Beebe is the publisher of a ninety-six-year-old newspaper called The Territorial Enterprise issued weekly in Virginia City, Nevada. His recent book entitled Comstock Commotion is a history of that newspaper; a more colorful, vigorous, blood-spattered history has rarely adorned any publication. In addition to the various badmen of the west who made up a great part of its front-page news, the paper also has a literary background, since Samuel Clemens wrote for it a series of political dispatches. Together with his partner, Charles Clegg, Mr. Beebe has an extremely successful enterprise in his newspaper. He is now in a position to indulge himself and it is obvious from "Virginia and Truckee" that he loves the railroad, for he writes on the subject with vivacity, color, and charm. In addition to being the longest single item in this volume, this story is also technically non-fiction. However, we feel that the reader will find the experience sufficiently rewarding to justify the space it occupies.

IN THE RICH and enduring lexicon of the old American West, the roll-call of its resources and tally of its wonderments, no names are more fragrant with romance and high destinies than the now ghostly place names and institutional names of Nevada. Topping the list will be that of Virginia City, scene of the Comstock

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Lode, the most prodigious bonanza in the history of the world and one by comparison to which the mines of King Solomon and the wealth of the Incas, even the legendary fame of El Dorado and Golconda, pale to insignificance.

And there are others in this scroll of mighty doings: Gould and Curry, Best and Belcher, Yellow Jacket, Con. Virginia, Ophir, Crown Point, mines of incredible richness and glittering memories. And there are still others: Carson City, Washoe, Central Pacific, Territorial Enterprise, Mormon Station, Gold Hill, Six Mile Canyon, the Geiger Grade, the Truckee Meadows, the pools of Sandy Bowers. All are significant of commotional doings in the heroic past.

And there is Virginia and Truckee, golden railroad to yesterday, the railroad which made possible the Big Bonanza, the railroad whose bright fame for decades was outshone only by the names of the mines themselves whose wealth it carried down to the mills on the Carson River. The mills, whose stacks and towering battlements once made a metropolis along the river shore as dense as the mills of Pittsburgh today, are now vanished in the desert more completely than the traces of Carthage or the nine cities of Troy.

Yet only yesterday their smoke ascended in towering clouds above the summit of Mount Davidson, the implications of their thundering stamps in an eccentric rigadon of riches were audible to the ends of the earth. Pause, philosopher, by the margins of Carson and reflect on the dusty destinies of mankind. The rivers of Babylon where the Israelites sat them down and wept were no more eloquent of departed mightiness.

This is the story of a railroad so endowed with romance and wealthy destinies as to have become a legend

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in its own lifetime, an integral portion of the greatest of all pioneering sagas, the *matière* of the old American West. It was once the richest railroad in the world measured in terms of return upon its investment and in the tangible assets it transported. Its traffic was in fabulous ores almost to the exclusion of all else. Its passengers and the arbiters of its operations were kings, more powerful in the symbolism of their Prince Albert frock coats than many anointed heads surmounted by historic crowns. Its terrain and domain were and, eighty years after its first flowering, still are among the grand and lonely regions of the habitable earth.

Sing, therefore, O Muse of Tractive Force and Valve Gear, of the Virginia and Truckee, a railroad of such superlatives that, like the Comstock it served and the San Francisco it enriched, its name will be forever currency in the language of the trans-Mississippi.

An English philosopher contemporary with the flowering years of Virginia City and the Comstock, Herbert Spencer, evolved the metaphysical theory that every act in life and history is the direct and unavoidable result of every act which has preceded it, and by this token the V & T was the direct and unavoidable result of the prospecting in 1859 on the eastern slopes of Mount Davidson in the then Territory of Western Utah of four boozy and disreputable scoundrels who found the world-shaking Comstock Lode. Two of them were Peter O'Reilly and Pat McLaughlin who uncovered the first specimens, and a third was a blackmailer and free-booter of impressive manner and sanctimonious pretensions named Henry Comstock who declared them to have done their prospecting on his property and cut himself in on a good thing. The fourth was a tosspot and tavern valiant named James Finney, popularly

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known as "Old Virginny" from his claims to birth in aristocratic circumstances in the Old Dominion. One night, early in the history of the Comstock, this prophetic ancient was taken in wine and, on the way home to his shack, tripped and fell, smashing a bottle of whisky he was carrying as a precaution against the night air and altitude. Reluctant to let the liquor disappear into the elemental earth without having some good of it, he turned the catastrophe into a christening party and then and there named the tent town Virginia City.

Tidings of precious metals in Nevada were nothing new to the Mother Lode. As early as 1850 a William H. Moore of Indiana, who had driven the first wagon ever to cross the plains from St. Joseph to California, reported a number of prospectors digging for gold in Carson Valley but that the biggest single piece of ore he had heard reported was worth no more than \$15. But when it was reported on the strength of reliable assays that the samples of "blue stuff," long discarded by miners on the east side of Mount Davidson as worthless, ran to several thousand dollars a ton in silver the rush which, a decade before, had carried the tide of fortune seekers westward over the Sierra was reversed and the greatest wave of adventurers the world has ever known suddenly deserted the diggings of the Mother Lode and rolled eastward to the Washoe.

Caught up in this mighty landfaring were such millionaires to be as John Mackay, Senator George Hearst, Adolph Sutro, James Graham Fair, Senator John P. Jones, Sandy Bowers, Jim Flood, Jack O'Brien, and mighty, bearded Senator William M. Stewart, perhaps the most persistent of all Nevada seekers and finders who was to see the rushes to Virginia City and to the Reese, to the White Pine, to Panamint, to Tonopah and

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Goldfield and, at long last, to the ultimate bonanza of them all, Bullfrog, above the incredible wastes of the Amargosa, well after the turn of the twentieth century.

They came by the roaring thousands, on mule back and afoot, a few in Concord coaches over the old grade by Hangtown and Strawberry and Carson City: the wicked and the willful, the soiled and solvent, the gyps and the gunmen, the splendid strumpets and blowzy madames, the gamblers, the newspaper reporters, kings and clowns. Wells Fargo came, the Bank of California came and, eventually, the railroad came, which is the concern of this story.

In the tumultuous decade that followed, Virginia and the Comstock, whose precincts by then included Gold Hill and Silver City as well as a fantastic array of mills and reducing plants along Six Mile Canyon, had several times been through the cycle of boom and bust. Virginia had exploded into a city of 20,000 wildly irresponsible inhabitants and the fame of its wicked ways, its continued uproar and production of stupefying wealth were celebrated throughout the civilized world. San Francisco in the decade following the discoveries of '49 was but a port of entry and financial center for the mining camps of the Mother Lode, and so it was with Virginia; but with her local banks Virginia was these things to the Comstock and, in addition, was the Comstock itself. Its banks and counting houses, agencies of the large San Francisco firms, were located on top of the very mine shafts that gave them birth and the twenty-four-hour-a-day civilization which flowered prodigiously on the slopes of Sun Mountain was like nothing which history had ever before recorded.

Virginia City sprawled wantonly and alluringly like Semiramis on the walls of Babylon. Throughout the early sixties its mine whistles screeched, its hoists clat-

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tered, its engines rumbled, dynamite boomed underground, gunfire exploded above ground, coaches clattered and ten thousand stamps in the stamping mills of Six Mile Canyon and along the Carson River thundered in a wild pavanne of prosperity. To the tune called by Virginia's mine superintendents stock booms mushroomed and collapsed on the exchanges and bourses of the world, a great civil war was fought to a conclusion generally felt to be satisfactory, San Francisco became the glittering jewel of the Pacific, and in far away Fifth Avenue alarming mansions were rising, turreted, machicolated, and crenelated, furnished in gilt and mirrors, plush and ormolu, with ballrooms, picture galleries and conservatories like visions in a mince-pie dream of the General Grant era. The mines of the Comstock paid for all of them.

But all was not well in the Comstock. The mine superintendents knew it, the market riggers in San Francisco's Montgomery Street knew it and when, in 1865, everyone knew it, Virginia suffered its first major stroke of mining apoplexy. The surface outcroppings were worked out; machinery for working the deeper stopes and winzes was prohibitively costly. Timber for shoring up the oppressive weight of Sun Peak in the galleries underground was getting scarce, and all sorts of unpleasant things like intrusions of boiling water and rock formations which flowed like liquid were being encountered at the lower levels. Miners were off by the hundred to the newly discovered strikes in the Reese River region and the White Pine Mountains of Eastern Nevada, and the word was getting about that the Comstock was mined out.

In this parlous pass confusion and dismay were on every hand.

Where to turn? What to do?

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In the offices of the all-powerful Bank of California in San Francisco and the bank's agency of Virginia City's C Street as the seventh decade of the nineteenth century drew to an ominous close there were men who knew very precisely what to do to reanimate the Comstock, to make it profitable to work the most reluctant mines and, at one and the same time, achieve for themselves a concentration of wealth and power that were to become legendary. These men were William C. Ralston, cashier, and Darius Ogden Mills, president of the Bank of California, and their Virginia representative, William Sharon. Sharon, later United States Senator from Nevada and even now a kingmaker in broadcloth, was a scholarly, fastidious little man, an orator who quoted Shakespeare and Catullus at political rallies and a *bon viveur* who could identify the vineyard of its origin of the most recherché Moselle at a sniff of its cork. He was also a practitioner of financial legerdemain to whose ambition no term or boundary had ever yet been established.

Sharon, to whose private ear came every smidge of information and rumor concerning the Comstock, contemplated a marble bust of the Bard in his private office in Virginia City and knew with a great knowing that the Comstock wasn't worked out, wasn't in fact even scratched on the surface even though the main shafts of Gould and Curry and Crown Point and the Mexican were already down to the 700-foot level. These were mere surface bonanzas that had been uncovered by obvious and unsophisticated mining methods and men who were greedy for a quick killing with no eye to the great main chance. Why, due to their rapacious inefficiency in discarding low assay ores, there were even now millions in silver already mined and available in the vast slag heaps and tailings of Virginia and Gold

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Hill simply because it couldn't be profitably worked at the prevailing price of cartage to the stamp mills down on the Carson River!

Sharon reached for his stovepipe hat, threw an Inverness cloak around his shoulders and walked down C Street to the office of Wells Fargo & Co., where he booked passage on the next Pioneer Stage for Sacramento. He caught the night steamer *Antelope* there for San Francisco and three mornings later was closeted with Ralston and Mills in the latter's private office behind the impressive façade of the Bank of California.

All the rest of the United States, submitted Sharon with appropriate quotations from the classical humanities and Scripture to emphasize the need for speedy transport and communications, was building railroads. Their iron rails in various gauges from the Erie's absurd six feet to the three-foot gauge which General William Jackson Palmer was planning over in Colorado were being laid everywhere in a national orgy of finance that was almost a religion. Why in Tunket hadn't they thought of it before? What the Comstock needed was a railroad!

The amazing Central Pacific which had confounded critics who denounced it as "the Dutch Flat Swindle" by actually breasting the western approaches to the High Sierra would soon be running through the shacktown of Reno on its way to meet the Union Pacific at an as yet undetermined point, probably somewhere in Utah. The railroad, by Jupiter, Sharon swore, was the answer to the Bank of California's prayer, and with Mills' and Ralston's permission he would set about bringing one into being. All that had to be done was to locate a line from the Comstock down to the Carson River over which those hitherto unworkable ores could be cheaply transported and the most inaccessible shafts

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would be reopened. On the return trip up Sun Mountain the cars would carry timbers for the boilers and for shoring up the subterranean diggings themselves and would carry them at a rate which would overnight put an end to the monopoly of the teamsters and their exorbitant charges.

But, before this final move could be executed in Sharon's grand over-all design for the acquisition of the wealth of the Comstock for the Bank of California, he was to undertake and accomplish one of the shrewdest financial coups of all the buccaneering saga of nineteenth century American finance. He set about acquiring for the Bank possession of all the reducing mills in the Nevada bonanzas. Most of these were in hard straits due to the declining production of the mines and, with infinite guile, Sharon allowed their owners to over-extend themselves and write overdrafts against the Bank's Virginia branch until, turning on the mill owners with the ferocity of the grey wolf, he was able to foreclose on seven of the biggest mills on the banks of the Carson River. These were organized into the Union Mining and Milling Company, and, within two years were joined by ten lesser properties, so that by the year 1869 the Bank of California, without in any way involving itself in the speculative business of mining precious metals, a form of investment which met with the implacable disapproval of Mills, still had an absolute strangle hold on the mining industry in the Comstock. Without credit from the monopolistic bank, no mine in all the Comstock could operate, and unless its ores were reduced in the mills controlled by the bank there would, it was explained, be no credit forthcoming.

Then, and then only, did the Barons of the Bank of California allow themselves the pleasure of getting

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down to cases in the matter of their shrewdly conceived railroad.

Legend has it that Sharon sent for I. E. James, a surveyor of local note, and without preliminary discourse asked if he could locate a railroad from Virginia City to the Carson River. James, who had never run anything more conventional than a county boundary and a jerk-water road in the Midwest, ran a finger around the inside of his gates-ajar collar and weakly allowed that he guessed he could.

"Then do so at once," said Sharon, and that was that.

It was the original intention that the Virginia and Truckee should be but fifteen miles, more or less, in length, running from the mine shafts of the Comstock to the stamping mills along the Carson River, and to Dayton, and perhaps into Carson City, but with a functioning transcontinental railroad being built through Reno it would have been folly to neglect this opportunity for a mainline connection.

A charter for the project was already in the forethoughtful Sharon's pocket. The Nevada legislature had granted one to a group of promoters back in 1865 but their right to build had never been exercised and the charter was reissued as of March 5, 1868, and building started as soon as funds were in hand.

Although it was no conventional part of railroad financing in that day and age for promoters of railroads actually to invest their own funds in such speculative ventures, Sharon, Mills, and William Ralston diverged from the accepted pattern in such matters and tossed \$1,500,000 of their own money into the project. Storey and Ormsby counties, through which the railroad would pass, issued bonds to the extent of half a million more, and the remaining independent mill own-

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ers ponied up with \$387,000, some of it to be paid back in freight credits. Thus even the poor, struggling independents were finally rounded up by "the Bank crowd," although it must be said the arrangement was altogether to their advantage. Wood costs would be cut from \$29 to \$21 per thousand feet, almost a million a year would be saved over the amounts now paid to the teamsters, and the new low freight rates would allow the processing of the hitherto despised low grade ores. The setup was adrenalin to the whole pattern of the Comstock.

Surveyor James' location came to twenty-one miles into Carson City with a ruling grade of 2.2 per cent and a curvature equal to twenty-two full circles. The enemies of the Bank Triumvirate, who were not innumerable, had a basis in mathematical fact when they said the V & T was the crookedest railroad in the world. Grading started early in 1869 at American Flat with 450 Chinese workmen, veterans of the Central Pacific's stormy construction days in the High Sierra and now released by that road's swift and easy progress down the Humboldt toward Promontory and glory. Fifteen construction camps were established and by early summer more than 1,600 workmen were spiking down the forty pound iron to untreated ties placed at intervals which would give a modern tracklayer the vapors. Picnic parties from Carson and Virginia used to drive out in buggies and carry-alls with basket lunches to watch the progress of the fabulous railroad, and the undertaking assumed overtones of festivity and hurrah as the spikes banged home, the coolies chattered like demented magpies and the long iron rails were run up across the desert in clouds of alkali dust by sweating teams and teamsters possessed of incendiary vocabularies.

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The general superintendent of the V & T was Hume M. Yerington for whom, at a later date, the Nevada township which had previously been known as Pizen Switch changed its name. Yerington, possessor, in an age of universal beards, of what was generally admitted to be the finest set of sidewhiskers in the region, had originally been an independent mill owner who had been forced out by Sharon's squeeze play. Sharon knew him, however, for a man of unusual ability, and Yerington, who had too much sense to harbor a grudge, remained the ranking executive figure of the railroad until the time of his death many years later.

The railroad got under way with a whoop and a holler. September 28, 1869, was set as the day for Hume Yerington to drive a silver spike in the first rail to be laid in the shadow of Carson Mint, but when the editor of the *Appeal* appeared on the scene at the "painfully early" hour of seven which had been appointed, over his protest, as the great moment, he found that Yerington and James, unwilling to keep their track gangs idle for a single moment, had started the official proceedings half an hour earlier still. He was forced to fashion his account from the report of an interested eye witness, Mr. Bostwick of Gold Hill, who had presented the silver spike. It was expected that rail would be laid at the rate of half a mile a day, but inside of a fortnight Yerington was laying a mile and a half daily and by October 3 the great Crown Point trestle at Gold Hill was actually completed.

Now the *Appeal* was full of railroad excitements. In one day it carried dispatches to the effect that the Central Pacific had rolled a train through Reno with a single engine ahead of thirty-two cars, a new high in tonnage; that a vandal had attempted to burn the Central's trestle at Yuba; that the Salt Lake Branch Rail-

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road was progressing nicely; and that a great railroad banquet was being planned at Sacramento. A week later the cars were running between Carson and Empire and the editor of the *Appeal* was able to report that on an inspection run to the end of track "some ladies adorned the cowcatcher, the caboose was adorned by some of our fairest fair and we and some other handsome boys and girls sat on the tender."

"Our people spend all their holidays riding over the new track," said the paper and shortly afterward Yerington was forced to put a stop to these excursions in the interest of safety. "Bless me this is pleasant riding on the rail," the *Appeal* quoted editorially when it was possible to take the cars all the way to Mound House.

Two new locomotives from the East appeared on a siding at Reno with the letters "V C & T R R," and, since there was as yet no thought of running the iron except between Virginia and Carson the *Appeal* was forced to conclude the initials stood for "Virginia, Carson and Treadway," a local humorous allusion lost in the mists of antiquity. The new road was generally spoken of as the Carson and Virginia and it was not until some months later that it was decided to extend it to a connection with the Central on the banks of the Truckee.

Almost from the very beginning, life for the V & T was positively a spasm of excitement. It was a railroad that was born rich, figuratively with a silver coal scoop on the deck of its locomotives, and its destiny was to be inextricably identified with champagne and balls and millionaires, with party dresses and picnics and junketings. Its passengers were to be the great and powerful and desirable folk of the world, all attracted to the inexhaustible Comstock and the fabled wonderments of Vir-

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ginia City, a veritable Babylon precariously perched amidst the mineshafts and hoisting works above Six Mile Canyon.

By the time the V & T was finished, the Comstock had been through its first great depression of 1865 and was within two years of the discovery of the incredible treasure which will forever be known as the Big Bonanza. So astounding was the wealth uncovered in 1873 in the California and Consolidated Virginia mines that ever since that time historians have resorted to capitalization to differentiate this vast treasure from other and earlier discoveries along the Comstock. Times were good when the V & T was born; they were to become a cataclysm of wealth in its youth, and even in its maturity, until almost the very end, it was either to be tolerably self-supporting or else handsomely endowed and maintained by admirers.

Almost as soon as construction was under way reaching out toward Gold Hill and the Carson River in both directions from American Flat, Sharon had ordered two engines, the "Lyon" and the "Storey," and a third, the "Ormsby" was shortly afterward commanded. All were from Booth & Company and then a third order for the "Virginia" and the "Carson" was placed with the Baldwin works in the East. The three Booth locomotives were dismantled and hauled to Carson City, but the two Baldwins were scheduled to go into immediate service in construction work and were drawn by straining ox-team down through the Truckee Meadows as far as Steamboat Springs. Here, however, trouble was encountered, for the slim wooden bridge which sufficed for the buckboards of Wells Fargo & Company's pony express service out of Reno was too frail for the passage of these determined monsters, and they were forced to take the ford, to the detriment of pride and

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paint. Half way up the old Geiger Grade, not the smooth macadam auto road of today, but a far more exciting viastructure paralleling it which adventurous motorists who know of its existence can still take up the hill, the "Carson" was hopelessly bogged down in a pothole and had to be left for summer suns to dry it out. "Virginia" however at last rolled into the city of its name behind eighteen yoke of bellowing oxen and the saloons of C Street emptied themselves, and the balconies were crowded with cheering citizens as it hove into sight. Here was something even more wonderful and exciting than driving out to Mound House to watch the Chinese grading crews lay iron!

Two coaches, a mail car and baggage care were in the meantime being fabricated down at San Francisco, by the Kimball Manufacturing Company, while the V & T's first item of rolling stock, a little shanty car which later was to become the club car, "Julia Bulette," was being built right down at Carson yards by the railroad's mechanics.

It was at this period that the V & T began earning its reputation as the most champagne-conscious of all American railroads. Shrewd as he was in matters of finance, like his patron, William Ralston down in the Bank of California, Sharon admired to open wine when the occasion presented itself. A student of Shakespeare and the classical humanities and an orator of resounding periods, he was happiest when beguiling the public with entertainment of a major order and quoting from the Bard while the corks popped.

It was, therefore, no surprise to the happy citizenry when the arrival of the first train at Gold Hill, drawn by the little "Lyon" on November 12, 1869, was made the occasion for the first of a series of pleasant occasions, which were to continue throughout the entire

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lifetime of the railroad. The "Lyon" rolled in, an amazement of bunting, across the high Gold Hill trestle and with a great whooshing of exhaust from its enormous "Dolly Varden" stack, drew to a halt beside the red depot which may be seen to this day. There was beer in Mississippi for the general populace and vintage champagne, in enormous tubs of ice, for the distinguished guests. Whistles blew from every reducing mill and hoist all the way down the canyon to Silver City; the modest boiler pressure of the "Lyon" declined abruptly as the engineer leaned on the whistle cord; the people cheered and roared, the corks popped expensively and Sharon made spacious gestures to one and all to help themselves and to urge his neighbor to have more. It was all on the house.

Later, after appropriate welcomes had been expressed by the Mayor of Gold Hill and the editor of *The Gold Hill News* and after the Fire Department Band had rendered several selections, whose precise identity could only be surmised by reason of the booming of cannon from Fort Independence, Sharon unleashed the lightnings of oratory. He painted in lambent syllables the future of the Comstock, of which, indeed, who might speak with better authority? He pointed the way to illimitable vistas of opulence and power and to a future for Virginia City (and of course Gold Hill) beside which the dusty destinies of vanished Rome were of trifling consequence. When the V & T achieved the fullness of the operation for which it had been planned, the Comstock would tower fearfully and wonderfully, the ornament of the known and admiring world. None within hearing doubted the sentiments of the speaker for a moment, and everyone had another drink on the strength of them.

If the V & T was the glamor girl of American rail-

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roading, it may then fairly be said that its debutante party was Curry's Grand Fourth of July Railroad Ball with which the fine new shops at Carson were opened. For weeks in advance all Carson and Virginia, and of course, Gold Hill, Silver City, Genoa, Ophir, and Franktown were in a tizzy of excitement and the progress of the carpenters, the deliberations of the committee on arrangements and the details of the decoration occupied prominent space in the papers.

The enterprising Colonel Curry, who conceived the splendid idea, was reported to be paying \$250.00 for the band, an astronomical sum in those pleasant times, and a gesture which would show even the nabobs of San Francisco what was what over the hill in Washoe. No fewer than 50,000 feet of three-inch planks were laid over the tracks and pits of the new shops and a bandstand erected in the center "no larger than a common house." Sorensen's Store supplied a hundred varicolored medallions for the walls and Japanese lanterns in uncounted numbers were swung from the beams, hoists and roof timbers. The walls of the shops themselves, as yet innocent of coalsmoke and grease, were whitewashed as clean "as new fallen snow" and a special coat of sizing applied to the height of a man's shoulder, that the whitewash might not come off on fragile evening gowns and stylish broadcloth.

"The Colonel has had every inch of dance floor nicely planed that the fantastic toe may encounter no slightest obstacle," reported the Carson *Appeal* in a vertigo of excited satisfaction, "and the entire idea approaches the confines of the sublime."

All Carson Valley was outrageous with pride.

The night before the Fourth found Carson on the verge of dementia. Jacob Muller's Elegant Baths and

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Hair Dressing Salon was forced to stay open all night, so great was the press of custom. The *Appeal* announced that among those present on the morrow would be, in addition to the Governor and local dignitaries, both Sharon and the glittering William Ralston, prince of San Francisco banking, who would represent, according to the *Appeal*, "grand cash and broadgage capital." It was reliably reported that Perasich's San Francisco Market had imported six fresh pineapples to ornament the buffet, a gesture of uncommon spaciousness in the seventies when pineapples commanded five dollars gold at the shipside. The Fountain Restaurant was arranging an elaborate and satisfying buffet and the V & T had hauled to town a baggage car almost filled with cases of Louis Roderer champagne, the gift of the V & T's own William, later Senator, Sharon. The revels of imperial Rome knew no greater opulence!

The night of the ball itself the bars of Carson were treated to an elegance of attire unprecedented in the city's history. Silk hats and frock coats were the conventional attire of the time, but clawhammer evening coats and varnished boots from Roos Brothers in San Francisco were a comparative novelty at the Magnolia, Sarazac and Theater saloons and the genteel tap room of the Ormsby House.

And the attire of the fair sex which picked its way daintily across the rails of Carson yards to the V & T shops that unforgettable evening at eight o'clock to the minute, baffled the society reporters with its amaze-ments of rich fabric and costly designs. To this day a gentle old lady of Carson remembers that her father had gone all the way to San Francisco for a Paisley shawl for her mother to wear on the night of nights, and she will show it to you.

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A special train had brought down all the belles and eligible males of Virginia, whose ladies had spent the entire afternoon holding their hands above their heads, that their arms might achieve a fashionable degree of pallor.

Of the ball itself, the memory still lingers in the Nevada legend. Not even the Fourth of July roisterers who turned in a false alarm of fire at eleven o'clock, or the wretch who tossed a giant cracker through one of the south windows of the shops, were able to mar its brilliant progress. William Ralston showed up as promised. Sharon opened champagne in a manner to make the grand dukes of Russia, reportedly very extravagant fellows, look to their laurels. The revellers sat down to supper at the Fountain Restaurant's sumptuous buffet in relays of 150 at a time. There was lobster aspic and chicken salad and dainty watercress sandwiches and French vanilla ices and claret cup for the ladies, and a monsoon of champagne at Ralston's bar, over by the engine lathes. When the band had fiddled the last dollar's worth of waltz music (and everyone agreed it was a full \$250's worth, too) and the last of the claret cup had been consumed, it was six o'clock and the sun was high in the heavens in the general direction of Dayton. Never, never would there be a fete comparable in grandeur, festivity and splendid moments to the great Fourth of July Ball of 1873!

By the time the V & T was a functioning reality, a decade after the first rush to the Comstock, Virginia City was no more of a wild and woolly community than, say, New York or San Francisco. It was, in point of terrain covered, and population, probably the richest city in the world and its manners, attire and traditions were those of the American West in an urban mood, but the overnight millionaires, the gunfighting in the

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streets and the prospecting of new claims were all in the past. Virginia society, conducted generally along the lines of that of San Francisco, was gay, formal and animated. The ladies of the Fair, Flood, Blauvelt, Mackay and King mansions, when they drove out in the afternoon, went in beautiful landaus and barouches behind blooded horses in silver trimmed harnesses. There were grand operas at Maguire's and Piper's, there were rich and cosmopolitan hotels, there was the world famed Washoe Club where visiting notables were wine and dined into a coma and whose furnishings, according to a reporter for Horace Greeley's *New York Tribune*, might well be the envy of nabobs in Fifth Avenue or Beacon Street.

In a midst where shop windows displayed merchandise which would have been deemed costly in the Rue de la Paix, and where champagne and evening dress were the veriest commonplace of daily life, the mine superintendents, bank managers, correspondents of San Francisco's commercial houses, and branch managers of stock brokerages, were men of wealth, dignity and importance, James Anson King, manager of Wells Fargo's banking branch at Virginia, lived high above A Street in a Victorian mansion which to this day shows traces of opulence and lavishness of taste which would have been considered ostentatious in Boston or Philadelphia. There were 150 saloons, six police stations and four churches. There were music halls, iron foundries and other great manufactories and there was a vast multiplicity of Chinese laundries and opium dens. All that Virginia needed to make it, not only indeed the Queen of the Comstock, but by far the most important city anywhere west of Chicago, and that included San Francisco, was a railroad.

For San Francisco was being built and financed by

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the Comstock. Its vast industrial enterprises, its seemingly impregnable Bank of California, its fantastic Palace Hotel, its cable cars, seaport and the Nob Hill mansions of its ever crescent colony of millionaires, were all being financed by the profits from Gould and Curry, Yellow Jacket, Ophir, Best and Belcher, Crown Point and the other fabled mines of Virginia, Gold Hill and Silver City.

By the time it was in full function, the V & T was serving not only the new Golconda, but the Paris of the western world.

No short line railroad in history was as familiar to the powerful, rich and celebrated of the world as was the V & T during the seventies and eighties. Hank Monk, the archetypal stage driver, was to achieve fame by terrifying Horace Greeley almost out of his whiskered wits, by taking him from Virginia to Placerville, over the breathless abysses of the King's Canyon Grade with six horses at a dead gallop. but the V & T got its passengers up to Gold Hill and Virginia in less strenuous manner.

At first the Comstock kings rode more or less informally in long cabooses with facing longitudinal benches and a row of magnificent cuspidors "of tasteful and fanciful pattern" ranged down the middle of their aisles. Then came the beautiful coaches and combines built in one of William Ralston's carriage shops in San Francisco, with elaborately decorated oilcloth ceilings and red velour seats and little curlvue baggage racks, which could accommodate nothing more voluminous than a small brief case. One of these was, until a short while since and may still be, in the coach house of the Bath and Hammondsport, in upstate New York where it was stored after appearing in "Rail-

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roads on Parade" at the New York World's Fair of fragrant memory.

The Central Pacific was reluctant to allow its costly Silver Palace sleeping cars run over the V & T's precipitous grades, and the high trestle at Gold Hill, until one fine morning in the early seventies, the celebrated car "Pullman" with its designer on board came up to Virginia on the end of the night train from Reno, after which demonstration of faith the Central relaxed and sleepers were put into regular operation out of San Francisco.

And after the sleepers, inevitably, came the golden age of private railroad cars bearing the great, and assistant great, to behold at first hand the wonders of the Yellow Jacket and Cholar-Potosi, to perform on the stage of Piper's Opera House or to attend stupefying banquets in their honor, at the Washoe Club or the International Hotel. In this manner came President Grant and General Sherman and Governor Leland Stanford of California aboard his ornate car, "The Stanford," which had pleasantly outraged public opinion by costing \$30,000, when his wife gave it to him as a birthday present. By the time he was United States Senator, Sharon too had a private car and it was, of course, frequently taken up from Carson Yards with, it may be imagined, a deal of careful handling and gentle spotting on the house track at Virginia.

The Emperor Dom Pedro of Brazil unhappily bypassed Virginia City, although he wanted to see the Bear River trestle of the Nevada County Narrow Gauge over in California, but Phineas Barnum brought notables to Virginia in a tumult of publicity, and was followed in their private Pullmans and Silver Palace sleepers, by Helena Modjeska, Adelina Patti, John McCullough, Ada Isaacs Menken, Salvini the Younger,

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Edwin Booth and Maude Adams. David Belasco, who was stage manager at Piper's in the early days, used to ride it regularly and, of course, all of the executives of the Bank of California, and later the Bank of Nevada, had drawing rooms aboard its overnight sleepers from Oakland Mole.

When the party of the Baron Rothschild arrived in an uncommonly beautiful private car, Yerington was so enchanted by its style and decor that he was able to persuade Darius Mills that a man of his position could scarcely afford to ride in common Pullmans, and that he, too, should have a private car. Mills, always conservative, balked at paying the Pullman works the \$35,000 which was their estimate on such a vehicle, and thriftily instructed Yerington to rebuild one of the V & T's passenger coaches as his private hack. This Yerington was able to accomplish in the Carson shops at the bargain rate of \$2,500 and Mills, down in San Francisco, at once set about preparations for a stylish trip to Washington. Yerington was charged with the task of finding a good cook, but it seems that Clarence Mackay saw the car and somehow contrived to borrow it before even the V & T's president was able to set foot aboard his own property. Whether or not he ever took it to Washington isn't in the record. Yerington was inordinately pleased with the car and himself travelled widely in it under the liberal arrangements for such de luxe voyaging which obtained at the times, and maintained that it was a fine advertisement for the V & T.

He was also forever writing friends about the splendors of this paradigm of all luxurious varnish, and more than once his letters to friends and business associates casually mentioned the circumstance that "my car is now in the East being occupied by his family and

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Mr. John Mackay, one of the Bonanza Kings and the richest man in the world."

Ever a great railroad for picnics, excursions and jollifications, the V & T was constantly being called on for special trains to take the Brigade Nevada Militia for a state review by the Governor at Carson or to transport the Turnverein for a picnic in Washoe Meadows at the Sandy Bowers Mansion where there were swimming pools, shade trees and other conveniences for relaxation and philosophy.

There were, to be sure, minor tumults and uproars within the family circle of the V & T during its early years. In 1875 Yerington found occasion to purchase from the Baldwin works two switchers, one of which, the "J. W. Bowker," is still preserved, the property of the Pacific Coast chapter of the Railway and Locomotive Historical Society. "The switch engine for Carson I shall name 'The James,'" Yerington wrote to Mills, "and the Virginia switcher I would like to name 'The J. W. Bowker' after our master mechanic as it would please the old man."

Less than six months after this Bowker was out of favor with the general superintendent. It would seem that the old sir had long been possessed of a leaning for the bottle and one afternoon the shops were disturbed by a fearful row between Bowker and his foreman and, when it was ascertained by Yerington that his master mechanic was, as he later wrote Mills, "full up of whisky," he was summarily discharged.

A perpetual thorn in Yerington's side and what he chose to regard as his cross in life was James G. Fair, one of the celebrated Bonanza Kings of the Comstock, who was always at loggerheads with the V & T's general manager. Yerington might be on the best of terms

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with Flood and O'Brien, the millionaire saloon keepers, and might loan his elegant private car to Mackay, but with Fair there was nothing but trouble.

A great deal has been written about the frontier journalism of the old West, underscoring its integrity and the homely virtues of honesty and fearlessness on the part of its editors, but there is reason to believe that these existed more in the fancy of historians than in recorded fact. A case in point is the long catalogue of villification and abuse to which the V & T and its owners was subjected by Denis McCarty, editor of the *Virginia Chronicle*. Under McCarty, the *Chronicle* was little more than a large scale blackmail operation and its abuse of the V & T was solely dictated by the hope that Mills and Sharon would tire of its nuisance value and buy out McCarty who named the fantastic sum of \$50,000 as its price. When, a few years after, the *Chronicle* did indeed close, its assets were sold for less than \$500.

Yerington, in his capacity as spokesman for Mills, offered McCarty a salary of \$150 monthly to call off his editorial dogs, but McCarty sent down word to Carson that he couldn't accept a retainer of this sort but was quite agreeable to the equivalent in advertising from the mines associated with the V & T and for passes for himself and his staff over the road itself.

Upon receipt of this intelligence Yerington, his whiskers and coat-tails standing out in the slipstream, jumped on a light engine then standing in Carson yards, and hastened up the hill to conclude negotiations. There could be no doubt that McCarty had gotten under everybody's corporate skin. The next day Yerington was able to write Mills that "McCarty has come to terms for \$150 advertising per month and the passes

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and agrees to wheel into line, quit his abuse of you and act like a white man from now on."

In its hour of greatness the V & T was a veritable paradigm of successful railroad operation and management, and officials from other roads arrived in ornate business cars in numbers to interview Yerington in the general manager's office at Carson and ride the grades above Empire. They inspected the fortress-like shops and engine house in Carson Yards, marveled at the Gold Hill trestle towering above the hoists of the Yellow Jacket and were wined into happy comas by Sharon in the world-famous Washoe Club at Virginia amidst surroundings and art objects that were the envy of millionaires in Fifth Avenue and on Nob Hill. The V & T was by way of becoming a legend along with the Comstock it served.

In eighty years the fundamentals of its operation were never changed. Trains were dispatched by telegraphic order, later by telephone. Its stub switches, target switch stands and light rail from the mills of Sheffield, are still in useful operation. Its locomotives, first burning wood, later coal and still later oil fuel, were always of traditional steam design. No diesel ever rolled over its right of way although, at one time, and with a notable lack of effectiveness, passengers were carried in a McKeen gasoline motor coach. This unsightly herdic, painted a bright red, and with portholes for windows, spent most of its time in the shops and now is a lunch wagon on the outskirts of Carson. Even as a dog wagon it was no great success and has several times changed hands.

The operating life of the V & T over the eight decades of its existence was singularly free from the melodrama and catastrophe so often associated with mountain railroading in the old West. There never was a

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serious wreck and never a really important train robbery. Wells Fargo's armed messengers rode the bright yellow combines and treasure cars with but few occasions to burn black powder in the interest of property protection. The great trestle at Gold Hill, the road's greatest potential for calamity, never was the scene of an accident and although tunnels burned out and there were occasional derailment, the Nevada press was hard put to read dramatic overtones into these incidents of operation in an age when, elsewhere, train wrecks were of monstrous proportions. Operating speeds on the grades north of Carson were extremely conservative, the equipment was scrupulously maintained in the great shops at that point and over most of the line there was a high order of visibility.

In the natural course of events, tramps, Chinamen and livestock were annihilated and drunks who chose the rails for a couch came to no good end, but the most sensational headlines the *Enterprise* could evolve were "Death of a Vagrant Beneath the Wheels" or "A Tragedy in Chinatown" when some bemused Celestial in a popped coma fell in front of the night sleeper. Romance rode the V & T but it was the romance of riches and not of violence.

By 1873, according to Gilbert Kneiss, a ranking historian of nineteenth century railroading in the American West, Mills, Kalston and Sharon were sharing a cool \$100,000 monthly profit from the railroad, but almost everyone connected with the V & T seemed to share in its own splendid bonanza. That the golden harvest was not confined to the nabobs of Virginia and San Francisco is attested by the record which shows that in the middle seventies the road's section foreman at Franktown, where the Flying ME Ranch now stands adjacent to the track, was murdered for the sum of

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\$6,000 he was known to have about his person. Few section foremen of other railroads have been possessed of such sums.

Throughout the seventies after the uncovering of the Big Bonanza, as the last fabulous treasure of the Comstock came to be known, excitement piled upon excitement for the V & T. Motive power was in constant requisition, and the rail fans of the period, who included almost every member of the populace in any American community, were able to admire the acquisition of four more Baldwins in 1875 alone, while the previous year three Baldwins and two Cooke engines were added to the ever growing roster of Yerington's motive power.

In the middle of the decade the cataclysmic collapse of the Bank of California ended with the death of the brilliant Ralston who, only a few days before the closing of its doors, had sold his share of the V & T to Mills in an effort to bolster the Bank's tottering destinies. From then on the profits, still so great that, as Kneiss recounts, the staff was accustomed to sit up all night at the Virginia offices counting the day's take in gold double eagles, were divided between Sharon and Mills on a one-third, two-thirds basis.

By 1879 the mines were again beginning to show a decline and, although they continued to be profitable for another two decades, the real glory of the Comstock was fading. In 1879, too, President Grant aboard his private car "California" was brought to Virginia to be stupefied with hospitality, overwhelmed with oratory and dined into a splendid stupor amidst the decanters and Victorian cruets sets which adorned the tables of the International Hotel. It took a stout constitution at any time to withstand Comstock entertainment and for a past President of the United States,

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chefs and bartenders, toastmasters and cellar-men went into a special trance and brought forth sybaritic follies of monstrous proportions.

In 1880, when the pattern of Nevada mining was spreading to the southward and overflowing across the state boundary in Mono County in California, there came into being, with capitalization of Mills and Sharon behind it and Hume Yerington as its manager, one of the most remote little railroads in all the record of the old West. The narrow gage Carson and Colorado was built to connect the then booming mining towns of Hawthorne, Candelaria, Bodie, Aurora and Benton with the V & T at Mound House five miles east of Carson City and it was originally planned to run it to the Colorado River. But construction was halted at Keeler near Owens Lake in the shadow of Mount Whitney and there a portion of it has remained until this day as the Owens Valley branch of the Southern Pacific and the only narrow gage trackage of this mighty carrier.

Neither of the wicked towns of Aurora and Bodie were to be included in the C & C trackage but were to be connected by a short line running from Benton and known as the Bodie and Benton. Although the B & B eventually materialized it never did get as far as Benton, but it has survived in the Western legend on the basis of its little engines, "Mono," "Inyo" and "Como." A wag of the time remarked that when its finances were improved the road would "probably acquire three or fomo."

But the C & C never really won Mills' affection and legend has it that when Sharon and Yerington took him on a dusty two days' inspection trip over the newly completed little 293-mile pike, the huffy financier shook his head and was gloomily of the opinion that "they

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had built the railroad either 300 miles too long, or 300 years too soon."

For many years this dark prophecy seemed vindicated and the road remained an orphan among Nevada railroads. Many of the southern mines failed of their original rich promise although both Aurora and Candelaria continued to produce fitfully right into the twentieth century. Some borax was hauled out from the Keeler end, but the road was continually in borrasca and in 1900 Mills sold it in its entirety to the Southern Pacific which continued to operate it as the Nevada & California Railroad.

It was only after its disassociation with the V & T that good times came to the Carson & Colorado. The Tonopah and Goldfield booms blossomed into bonanzas of incalculable richness and Jim Butler's errant burro, in whose pursuit its owner made the first Tonopah strike, had started a stampede that was to bring thousands of adventurers to the southern desert. More than \$125,000,000 was to come out of the diggings at Tonopah alone, and Marsh and Stimler's discoveries a year or so later at Goldfield were to create a new generation of millionaires of which George Nixon and George Wingfield were the Nevada representatives while outsiders such as Montana's acquisitive Senator Clark and New York's Bernard Baruch and Charles M. Schwab were to take hundreds of thousands of dollars of Nevada wealth out of the state.

In the early years of Tonopah the nearest rail connection was with the Carson and Colorado at Mina and until the completion of the Tonopah Railroad all ore was freighted out to the railroad by team. These were indeed blue days and fair for the orphaned and rejected little Carson and Colorado and in a single year it repaid its purchase price of \$2,750,000 to the Southern Pacific.

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Its diminutive combines and passenger coaches bulged with mining engineers, prospectors, eastern capitalists, adventurers, gamblers, strumpets, gunmen and music hall troupes, and northbound ore cars sagged with unaccustomed consignments of rich freight, some of which assayed as high as \$579,000 for a forty-eight ton car-load.

The Nevada desert bloomed with gold and guns and girls and between its connection at Reno and its Carson and Colorado terminus at Mound House, the Southern Pacific was bringing a vast revival of business to the V & T. Memories of the Comstock times were evoked as entire trainloads of mining machinery, foodstuffs, building materials, roulette wheels, mahogany bars and all the integral parts of mining civilization rolled through Truckee Meadows to clog the yards at Mound House so that shipments were often delayed a month or more at this bottleneck. Simply, the Carson and Colorado didn't have the rolling stock to take over what was consigned to it by the V & T. In the end, the Southern Pacific, not entirely pleased with putting money in the pocket of a line which did no more than link two of its own properties, built the Hazen branch of its own rails connecting with the Tonopah and Goldfield at Mina and by-passing the V & T altogether. The last V & T boom ended, as had the others before it, in the inevitable decline into borrasca. Today only the ninety miles of narrow gage between Keeler and Laws, California, survive as vestigial traces of the little Carson and Colorado and on the truck plates of its one remaining combine, now used as a way car, may be traced the inscription indicative of its origins long ago: The letters read "V & T RR, Carson."

In an oblique manner, too, the V & T and the Comstock itself participated in the last great bonanza in

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the southern desert. In 1904 the vast Butters reducing mill employing more than 300 workmen was built in Six Mile Canyon, a costly monument to the optimism of the Comstock even though its mines were almost at the final end of their resources. When the strike at Tonopah came in, this was the nearest place its ores could be worked and the fabulous ores of the Jumbo and Mohawk mines were for a time carried in wagon freight to Mina where they were shipped to Mound House over the Carson and Colorado and thence up the grade to Virginia City over the V & T. A branch was built down the precipitous descent into Six Mile Canyon and the ore, in a curious reversal of traffic, was processed at Butters plant. In a year or two, however, Tonopah had its own mills, and today no trace of the V & T spur remains and the tremendous mills it served are but a heap of rubble amidst concrete emplacements.

April, 1897, was to witness a positive vertigo of excitements for the V & T. The Corbett-Fitzsimmons championship box fight was scheduled to take place at Carson and the world of sports and fashion descended upon the sleepy Nevada countryside in thousands. In anticipation of this happy event the V & T notified all the mills of the Comstock that the transportation of heavy freight for the mines would be suspended for a week. Every locomotive in the Carson roundhouse was fired up and kept in almost constant operation for that period with specials, excursions and private cars of fearful and wonderful decor and opulent resources of whisky and champagne in their ice boxes. Empty coaches clogged half the sidings between Carson and Reno and sleepers and diners and other luxury rolling stock were spotted in seemingly endless profusion under the tall cottonwoods in Carson yards.

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The Southern Pacific's chief dispatcher at Ogden reported no fewer than thirty special trains of solid Pullmans through from the East the day before the fight. The V & T hauled a special of ten Pullmans from Los Angeles alone and nine Wagner Palace cars from Cincinnati. Senator David Ingalls of Kansas, who, oddly enough, was reporting the doings for the *New York Journal*, arrived in a private car, as did Charlie Clark, son of Montana's affluent and acquisitive senator, who had borrowed his father's private car for the occasion and arrived with a party of "dead game sports in purple and fine linen with well groomed tiles." The report that the private hack boasted a marble bathtub and gold plumbing fixtures attracted crowds of curious who gazed in awe at its gold scrollwork and gleaming brass rails.

All in all, the strain on the V & T's resources was even greater than it had been back in the crisis caused by the big fire up at Virginia in '75, but somehow the tracks and trestles stood up under more than a hundred special trains, mostly Pullmans, and after the fight the *San Francisco Examiner* had the entire right of way to Reno cleared for its own press special which raced to its Southern Pacific connection with a number of staff artists and photographers on board including Homer Davenport who had been engaged to chronicle the fight of the century. Private cars were to roll over the V & T in later years but never in such florid profusion as they did that windy spring of 1897.

It is interesting to note that even the little Carson and Colorado shared in the general excitement since almost the entire population of Bodie, Aurora and Candelaria demanded transport to the fight and many of them made it in boxcars converted into club cars by the simple placing of a board between two barrels and

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installing a bartender. The C & C's few coaches and diminutive combines could never have accommodated the determined miners who finally arrived at Mound House in a pleasant alcoholic tumult and were taken over there by the V & T. The Bodie contingent had had to dig a road through the snow in all-night shifts to get to the narrow gage at Benton.

So far as the record shows the only private car, other than one built by Yerington in the Carson shops for Darius Mills back in the '70's to claim the V & T as its home railroad was the last such varnish ever to roll over the Carson meadows and up the ruling grade at Lakeview. It was "The Gold Coast," property of the authors of this monograph, which came to the V & T and was spotted for the summer under the cottonwoods in Carson yards. They had purchased the venerable hack from the Georgia Northern where it had served as business car for the road's president after seeing service in a similar capacity on the Live Oak, Perry and Gulf in Florida, where it had often been drawn through the swamps and along the bayous by graceful, balloon stacked wood burners. In the twilight of the V & T's years "The Gold Coast" brought to Carson a final touch of the luxury which had characterized the railroad's salad days, and the laughter of gracious guests and the popping of wine corks echoed for the last time across the midnight yards.

After the epic convulsions of the nineteenth century the V & T enjoyed briefly the heady excitements of the southern Nevada bonanzas as long as they lasted, and then settled into four long decades of genteel poverty and decline. In 1906 it was extended fifteen miles past the Indian reservation and town at Stewart down the richly cultivated Carson Valley to Minden. Minden, famous for its lamb and beef, butter and other wealthy

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dairy products, gradually became the major point of origin of its freight as the mills along the Carson River shut down and the mines at Virginia closed for the last time. In 1938 the rails between Carson City and Virginia were torn up and the railroad's great days became only a memory.

The year before that, Ogden Mills, who had inherited the property from his grandfather and purchased the outstanding shares from the Sharon estate on a basis of sentiment, died suddenly. He had paid its annual deficits out of pocket, being a very wealthy man, as a matter of family pride, but no provision had been made for its future. His obituaries in the newspapers of the land were in effect the handwriting on the wall for the V & T.

As it had done for many another short line, the Second World War enabled the V & T to live on what might well have been considered borrowed time. Numbers 25, 26 and 27 rolled the stock cars up and down to Minden in spring and fall, there was an almost daily car of oil for Stewart and the mail and passenger coaches carried more revenue freight than they had in years. Not infrequently, when there were as many as twenty tanks or stock cars for morning delivery, the down train was double headed and made a fine show as it poured smoke from twin stacks past the Bowers Mansion and up the grade past "Lord" Wellesley's estate. There were excursion trains, too, in the old manner of the Miner's Union for the delivery boys of the *Reno Gazette*, the members of the Railway and Locomotive Historical Society, the Lions Club, the California Nevada Railroad Historical Society, and many more. The management even took the road's oldest piece of rolling stock, the little shack car built back in '69, and made it into a club car named "The Julia

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Bulette" after a celebrated Virginia City strumpet of the seventies. Film companies occasionally hired the road by the day for atmosphere and background shots.

But there was a hitch to the excursion business. The rolling stock was becoming dangerously outmoded and atmosphere seekers wouldn't ride in modern coaches rented from the Southern Pacific. The V & T management was in terror that some serious accident should occur, and the light steel rail, much of it the original article laid in the early years of the road, was worn and in places crystallized. Replacement with modern, heavier iron was out of the question even though ties were replaced when the company's finances permitted and track gangs worked throughout the available months of the year.

Gordon Sampson, general manager after the death of Sam Bigelow, kept his fingers crossed that none of his trestles down Stewart way should burn out, a catastrophe which would probably have ended the V & T then and there. Engine speeds were restricted to five miles an hour on these and they were patrolled after each train during the dry months.

There was one minor windfall. The neighboring Nevada Copper Belt Railroad which precariously connected the now ghost town of Ludwig with Yerington and the Espee at Wabuska, gave up the ghost and Sampson was able to purchase for what amounted to a song its fine engine, No. 5, a sturdy, dependable and comparatively new Alco 2-8-0. To finance No. 5, old No. 25 was sold to the films, and as a minor adventure in bargain hunting Sampson also paid the Copper Belt \$250 for an almost new caboose which was painted with V & T colors and added to the dwindling roster of the road's rolling stock. There was even talk of buying a

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diesel, but the Mills estate in San Francisco wouldn't hear of this prodigality.

No. 5 could haul anything the dispatcher could tie onto it and was equipped with an air horn from the Southern Pacific shops at Sparks. After a while, however, the air horn was abated, at least on the southern end of the run, because its unaccustomed tones set all the dogs to howling and there were a great many dogs in Carson City. During the summer of 1948 business was good and consists of eighteen and twenty stock cars were not infrequent.

There are men still alive who remember the time when terrific blizzards overtook the V & T and when "Washoe zephyrs" piled the drifts so high below American Flat that the little engines were lost for days and when four engines pulling three cars into Reno were wholly invisible under mounds of accumulated snow which ran in mountainous ridges from pilot bar to stack-top and from stack to sand dome.

Dan A. Brown, now of Los Gatos, California, has told the authors something of the old days when he was Wells Fargo messenger at Reno:

"When No. 22 arrived back at Reno in the late afternoon after its 104-mile round trip to Virginia," he recalls, "its boiler lagging and brass were always as clean as when it started out. It was always wiped and polished at Carson on the return trip.

"One unusual set-up in my time was this: the Southern Pacific's train No. 23 left Goldfield in the day en route to San Francisco. Traveling north it connected with the Mound House branch at Wabuska, then headed toward the main line which it joined at Hazen. The Mound House branch train,

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after leaving Wabuska, connected at Mound House with the V & T. If 23 was late at Wabuska, the V & T was late out of Mound House so that the progress of the two trains to Reno was a triangular race with the Espee on one leg of the triangle and the V & T on the other two. When this was the set-up, 'Coonie' Poole, the V & T hogger, always made the train fly like a bat out of hell up the Washoe Valley with its whistle wide open for the grade crossings. The score was about 50-50 over a period of years, but it was a fine sight to see No. 22 all brass and black smoke and glory come tearing into town. In case of a dead heat we men of the Wells Fargo crew in Reno had to work two trains at once, one on each side of the depot. Sometimes, too, the Nevada-California-Oregon train would arrive at the same time on the other side of town and then we were really in a jam. The V & T was a wonderful railroad, I tell you, in the old days." Up to the very end the V & T maintained its flavor

of the long gone 1870's in its operations, properties and pervading atmosphere. Much of the iron between Carson and Reno was the original Sheffield rolled steel laid down when the road was new. Its stub switches with their red and white painted target stands were never changed in its lifetime of eighty years. The canary yellow and deep Gloucester green of its coaches were the same in 1949 as that which had gladdened the Nevada heart on the first rolling stock long ago in the eighties, although this had originally been painted green in its entirety.

The V & T was something that had survived out of the riding years of the coaches with six horses, the years of the great venturings and interminable land-farings which only the very old men of Carson Valley

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remember. When it was new the distances of the old West were great distances and the railroad a greater miracle than anything in the American record until that time. There is nothing in the terms of the twentieth century to lay hold upon the heart and fire the imagining comparable to the first coming of the graded rails.

And if anyone should doubt the heroic proportions of the V & T's importance in the history of Nevada he has but to look upon the Great Seal of the commonwealth, where a V & T locomotive crossing the Crown Point trestle above the hoists of the Yellow Jacket Mine is the heraldic emblem of the state.

Ever since the death of Ogden Mills the shadows have been closing around the V & T. The administrators of the Mills Estate, with the implacable rapacity of the janitors for the absentee rich, had at that time decided on the destruction of the property in the interest of taking a capital loss in taxes, and the mutations of time and the Nevada winters furthered this end so that it was with the utmost difficulty that Sampson was able to maintain operations at all. The tracks between Reno and Carson became so worn that he no longer dared run special excursions even on Nevada Day, the state birthday. In 1948 No. 27 was retired by the inspectors of the I.C.C. It was thirty-five years old and had served its owners well. Broken track and consequent derailments became a daily commonplace. The Mills Estate allowed no funds whatever for new rail or motive power and maintained the operating capital of the railroad at an absolute minimum, diverting funds to the Estate in the hope that eventually the property would run down like an unwound clock. Rumors of its sale at preposterously low figures circulated widely in Nevada and San Francisco and it was equally widely

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remarked that either the Mills Estate was allowing its sale at a fantastic mark-off in order to avoid the obloquy of abandoning a property from which it had taken such great profits in other years, or that the Estate was taking a shellacking in ignorance of the true potential liquidation value of the railroad.

The pulse of the V & T, as it entered its eightieth year, was beating very slowly indeed.

In the eightieth year of its useful existence, the V & T is still a wonderful and uncommonly beautiful railroad, the most beautiful, many people believe, in the terrain it traverses, of any short line anywhere. The ramparts of the High Sierras have changed only with the seasons since the first year of the V & T's going. Its late afternoon departure from the depot platform at Carson with the ringing of the ancient warning bell swung from the eaves is one of the homely dramas of American existence, a tribute to serene and orderly things in a serene and gently ordered world.

It is a microcosm of a way of life, vanished perhaps, but infinitely more valid than anything that has yet been devised to succeed it.

When, late in 1948, it became widely rumored that the V & T was to be sold and that its new owner would undoubtedly immediately petition for abandonment, the *Herald Tribune* in far-off New York was moved to editorial comment:

A LOSS TO THE WEST

It is an unredeemed misfortune that Nevada, a state of rich resources and uncommon natural beauty, despite its affluent history and glamorous frontier legend, should be possessed of no visible

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trace of sentiment. If it were, it would never permit the abandonment, now threatened, of its romantic and colorful Virginia & Truckee Railroad, a short line that is perhaps better known than any other of Nevada's more savory institutions and one which is celebrated, however indifferent Nevada may be to the circumstance, as a link between the present and the frontier past when Nevada had its beginnings. The V & T, which will be eighty years old next year, has enjoyed a fame far beyond the destiny of most little railroads and is known to all students of Western Americana as the railroad which brought down from Virginia City most of the \$600 million in silver and gold which the Comstock Lode produced in its prodigious flowering.

The V & T is no longer the paying proposition it once was, and it is on the cards that it will petition for abandonment and its rails be sold for scrap. The state of Nevada, which could purchase and maintain the railroad which brought its material wealth into being for the amount it takes in taxes from its roulette tables and other amusement sources every few minutes, is indifferent, apparently, to the fate of its last passenger-carrying short line.

If the V & T is sold to the junkman Nevada will have lost another of its holds upon the consideration of the amateur of the historic past and of the tourist who is not in search either of a quick divorce or quick crap-game. Nevada may come to regret it.

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In the end, however, it was demonstrated that the sale of the railroad to a junking firm would be less justified economically than for the owners to close it and dispose of its assets piecemeal. It was decided that the V & T should be liquidated with dignity and in January of 1949, not quite eighty years from that distant morning when Ike James and Superintendent Yerington spiked the first rail, Gordon Sampson petitioned the Interstate Commerce Commission for permission to abandon.

Well might the *Herald Tribune* be interested in the V & T. The great grandfather of its present owner and editor, Whitelaw Reid, had been Darius Ogden Mills who had for many years pocketed a cool \$400,000 a year from the railroad in its profitable heyday. Mills did not approve of the Carson and Colorado but he had always a warm place in his heart for the V & T as had his grandson, Ogden Mills.

The passing of the V & T will leave Nevada, in all truth, a graveyard of railroads whose only peer as a necropolis of short lines is Colorado. Forgotten by all but professional railroad historians is the Pioche and Bullionville which was to link that fabulous mining community with Senator John P. Jones' ambitious San Pedro and Salt Lake line. Gone, save in its vestigial remnant, is the Southern Pacific's Owens Valley branch across the state line in California, the once wistful and momentarily opulent Carson and Colorado. With the snows of yesteryear are the Nevada-California-Oregon narrow gauge, the Eureka and Palisade of fragrant memory and the once riotous Nevada Central. Only graded rights of way in the southern Nevada deserts serve to remind of the life that once flowed along the Tonopah and Tidewater, the Bullfrog-Goldfield, the Tonopah and Goldfield and the Las Vegas

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and Tonopah. Dead in the surveyor's reports is the proposed Nevada and Utah Railroad that was to run from Tonopah to the southern littoral of the Great Salt Lake. Closely associated, in California, was the unsinkable Senator Jones' short line, unsurveyed but actually financed, that was to run from San Bernardino over the Cajon to the foot of Surprise Canyon at the height of the fantastic Panamint boom.

When the Virginia & Truckee banks the fires of its engines at last for the long night, as have so many little railroads before it, it will come not again, for the dead return not. But, like the sparkling Concords that went before it down the dusty highroads of yesterday, its memory will live forever in the minds of men, trailing an unforgotten banner of woodsmoke across the Nevada sagebrush where once the railroad ran.

GREAT RAILROAD STORIES OF THE WORLD

Edited by
Samuel Moskowitz

As the railroads have become electrified, dieselized, and slowly replaced by other forms of transportation, the process has only served to increase the true devotee's nostalgic interest in the old coal-burners which pioneered the western development of this country and made possible our tremendous industrial growth. Here is the first book in many years to recapture the day when the railroads were bursting with expansive energy; when a plume of smoke curling behind a speeding engine fired the imagination of every farm boy; when the thunder of a locomotive exhaust reverberating across the valley was the most exciting of all sounds; and when the lonesome wail of a steam engine at night evoked a special kind of ecstasy.

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But they come to me
now with the baccha-
nal sign,
And the lips that touch
liquor must never
touch mine . . .

Old Soldiers never die,
Never die,
Never die . . .

Father, dear Father come with me
now,
The clock in the steeple strikes
one . . .

My mother was a lady—like yours
you will allow,
And you may have a sister, who
needs protection now . . .

Frankie and Johnnie were
lovers,
Oh, Lordy, how they could
love . . .

He would fly through the air
With the greatest of ease,
This daring young man . . .

There is a tavern in the
town,
And there my dear love
sits him down, sits him
down . . .

Oh! Susanna,
Don't you cry for me . . .

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